



## Girls on the Run St. Louis

December 16, 2012

Maplewood Chamber of Commerce  
2915 Sutton Boulevard  
Maplewood, MO 63143

### **Girls on the Run**

*is a life changing after school program for 5th through 8th grade girls.*

*The highly interactive curriculum contains self-esteem enhancing lessons with uplifting workouts designed to develop the whole girl: her physical, mental, emotional and social self.*

*Joining girls are empowered with positive self-confidence and increased self-esteem, a sense of achievement and a love for running. They run for a meaningful cause and give back to the community through a service project each season.*

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Dear Chamber Members,

Girls on the Run of St. Louis respectfully submits this nomination form for the Business of the Year Award.

### **Program Overview**

Girls on the Run of St. Louis (GOTR) is a non-profit, Maplewood-based organization whose mission is to prepare and educate girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living. We provide an innovative after-school program in the greater St. Louis area for girls in grades 3-8 (ages 8-13 years) that combines training for a 5K (3.1mi) race with life skills lessons designed to encourage healthy habits and an active lifestyle. We strive to increase each girl's fitness level and self-esteem as well as teach each of them skills that will help them navigate the pressures of adolescence and reduce the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors. We work to reduce adolescent pregnancies and eating disorders, depression, suicide attempts and the occurrence of substance/alcohol abuse and childhood obesity. In short, we change the way girls see themselves and help them recognize the wealth of opportunities available to them.

The GOTR program uses an academically evaluated curriculum delivered in small groups by two volunteer coaches (minimum) per program. The curriculum contains 20 lessons that focus on specific life skills such as healthy decision-making, conflict resolution, healthy eating, body image, leadership and teamwork. The program meets twice weekly for 10 weeks in the spring and fall. At the end of the program, the girls perform a community service project and participate in a 5K run as the culminating achievement. Our curriculum is non-competitive and we invite and encourage all girls to participate regardless of athletic ability.

### **Community Involvement**

Girls on the Run of St. Louis is a 501(c)(3) with a proven record of successfully delivering the program. Started in 2002 with 20 girls at one site, it has grown exponentially. In 2011 we have run programs at 205 sites in the greater St. Louis area with more than 4,382 girls participating in the program. Spring 2011 marked the first season that our program was offered in the Maplewood-Richmond Heights School District. This year we served 26 girls in the district on 2 teams at the elementary and middle school level.

GOTR is a volunteer based organization that has grown almost entirely through word of mouth because it offers a unique solution to a critical need in St. Louis. We had well over 50% growth in Maplewood residents volunteering for the organization in 2011 as members of our race committee, a program coach or a race-day volunteer.

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314.862.6266  
fax 314.644.4246  
[www.girlsontherunstlouis.org](http://www.girlsontherunstlouis.org)

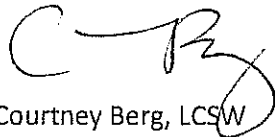
All of our growth has occurred where schools have contacted us to implement the GOTR program. We are affiliated with Girls on the Run International, which licenses the right for us to use the program exclusively in the greater St. Louis area but offers no financial support. GOTR-STL is now the third largest council in the United States and all of our funds raised stay in St. Louis. We have eight full time staff members and over 1,000 volunteer coaches, running buddies, race volunteers and support volunteers.

**Innovative Service**

Our philosophy is to never turn a girl away that wants to participate in our program and cannot afford it. We distributed \$238,000 scholarships during the 2010-2011 school-year. This year we anticipate distributing over \$360,000 in scholarships during the 2011-2012 school-year. We have been able to distribute \$2,825 in scholarships to families in the Maplewood-Richmond Heights School District thus far to allow any girl that want to participate the capacity to do so.

We are so grateful for your consideration of our nomination. We have enclosed a letter of support from one of our volunteer coaches in the MRH School District. We would appreciate the opportunity to present you with further information and we welcome any questions or suggestions you may have regarding Girls on the Run of St. Louis, its programs, or its goals. Please contact me at (314) 862-6266 or by email at [Courtney@girlsontherunstlouis.org](mailto:Courtney@girlsontherunstlouis.org), and of course visit our web site at [www.girlsontherunstlouis.org](http://www.girlsontherunstlouis.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Berg', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Courtney Berg, LCSW  
Executive Director

December 15, 2011

Re: Letter of Support for Girls on the Run St. Louis

To Whom It May Concern:

After completing my first season with Girls on Track, I am delighted to write a letter of support for this awesome program. My name is Sandy Dillon and I am a licensed clinical social worker, currently staying at home with my two daughters. Missing working in the community, I decided to volunteer my time with Girls on the Run, a program I had heard great things about and a place I was hoping I could assist young girls in leading healthier lifestyles.

The local middle school at Maplewood Richmond Heights was interested in starting the program so I asked if I could coach the team. We had eleven girls from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, many of which had never run a 5k. Girls on the Run St. Louis has greatly benefited the Maplewood community. In a time when obesity is at a record high, the Girls on Track program offers an opportunity to not only learn about healthier living habits, but to put those skills into action. The evidence based curriculum was well developed and easy to follow. While the season ended with a 5k race in which we helped the girls train, the greater focus was on the emotional and social hardships typical in the life of an adolescent. We discussed bullies, eating disorders, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, leadership and how to make good decisions. Every practice offered a healthy snack, an opportunity to discuss pertinent issues and topics, and physical exercise.

The pressure for schools to provide health and wellness options to our students in today's environment is challenging. The Girls on the Run program offers a high quality product to our community that makes a real difference in lives of young women. I highly recommend the organization as a vital part to the Maplewood community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Dillon".

Sandy Dillon, LCSW