

Making A Difference: *Girls on the Run*

Cultivating *Joy and Confidence*

By Kim Tarnopolski

Confidence is defined as a belief in oneself and one's powers or abilities. This trait, especially in children, takes time to develop. As parents, we seek opportunities for our kids to explore and find their unique selves. We want them to be strong and confident as they navigate this big world of ours.

However, the tween and teen years can result in the unending effort to fit in, to be noticed and to be liked. This is especially true of girls. The feelings of self-doubt and negativity start to creep in and take over the positive moments in life.

Fortunately, there are organizations like Girls on the Run that focus on inspiring girls to be joyful, healthy and confident. This nonprofit integrates a fun, experience-based curriculum with running and can be found in over 90 schools and clubs across the Valley. In 2016, over 1,300 third-eighth grade girls completed their 10-week program.

The girls meet twice a week and the 90 minute program focuses on participants developing and improving their confidence in who they are, developing strength of character, responding to others and oneself with care, creating positive connections with peers and adults and making a meaningful contribution to community and society. All of this is accomplished while training for a celebratory 5k run which gives them a tangible sense of achievement as well as a framework for setting and achieving life goals.

The true success of the program, however, is not told in the numbers, but rather in the words of the girls who participate. "Girls on the Run made me realize that I am the boss of my brain." "I know that whatever I set my mind to do, I can do." "At Girls on the Run I learned how to be comfortable in my own skin!"



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Sharon McLaughlin and Cindy Brown had the opportunity to share Girls on the Run with the members of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun. The mission touched the hearts of the women present and Girls on the Run was awarded donations totaling \$9,050. This donation will provide program scholarships to 60+ girls in need. The program costs \$180 per session. Scholarships are provided on a sliding scale based on household income.

Visit www.gotrmc.org and www.100wwcvalleyofthesun.org to learn more about these meaningful organizations.

