



Girls on the Run Q&A with Jamie Daerda

By Andrea Shomidie, Esse Health

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In 1996, Molly Barker, a four time Hawaii Ironman Triathlete, established Girls on the Run International. At the age of 15, Molly bought her first pair of running shoes. Like most other girls her age, she was struggling to fit in at school. She found comfort in putting on those shoes and running. Running helped her feel strong, beautiful and powerful.

Barker went on to earn her master's in social work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After college, she worked as a track coach and a college counselor at a small private college addressing the needs of women with eating disorders, alcohol and substance abuse problems and depression. All of her training and experiences inspired her to create an organization to help pre-teen girls through running.

At Esse Health, our Human Resource Director Jamie Daerda is involved with this organization and we would like to share her story. Please read the Q&A below to find out more about Girls on the Run.

Q: What is Girls on the Run (GOTR)?

Jamie: Girls on the Run is a national non-profit prevention program that encourages pre-teen girls to develop self-respect and healthy lifestyles through running. There are over 150 affiliate locations, including one here in St. Louis.

Q: What is your involvement with GOTR?

Jamie: I am one of the coaches at an elementary school in Ladue, Missouri. We try and show the girls how fun and rewarding running can be for them. The goal is to prepare the girls for a 5K run on Sunday, May 16th at Forest Park.

Q: Why did you choose to get involved with GOTR?

Jamie: When I was looking for an organization to get involved with, I wanted to do something I felt strongly about. I think it is really important to teach young girls about having self-respect and choosing a healthy lifestyle. The lessons these girls are learning will impact them for the rest of their lives. Looking back, I wish I had the support I needed to stay healthy and active.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about the 5K run?

Jamie: For the girls, the completion of the 5K is their ultimate goal. It is what they will be training for all season. I will be a "running buddy" for 1 or 2 girls during the race to help motivate them to the finish line. The run is a family-friendly event and is open to runners and walkers of all ages. With more than 4,000 registrants, it is one of the largest 5K races in St. Louis.

Q: About how many girls do you coach and what are their age ranges?

Jamie: There are 12 girls on my team and they range from 3rd to 5th grade.

Q: How many times a week do the girls train?

Jamie: We meet every Monday and Wednesday in the afternoon from 3:30 – 5 p.m.

Q: How are you preparing the girls for the 5K run?

Jamie: The national organization supplies each affiliate location with a curriculum to cover during the 12 week training period. We will start each session by talking to the girls about a certain topic or lesson. For example, one of the lessons might be about nutrition. So we will talk to the girls about the importance of healthy eating and choosing the right foods. When we go outside and start running we also try and incorporate the lesson for the day into fun running games.

Q: What should someone do if they want to be a volunteer for GOTR?

Jamie: I would strongly encourage anyone wanting to give back to the community to get involved with GOTR. If someone is interested in becoming a volunteer, visit the St. Louis GOTR website at www.girlsontherunstlouis.org. There is an application and background check process that needs to be completed before any volunteers are accepted.

If you enjoy running and are interested in raising money for this great organization, SoleMates is the charity running leg of GOTR. Money raised through SoleMates will benefit the GOTR-STL scholarship fund and help support new programs throughout greater the St. Louis area.

Q: What should parents do if they want to get their kids involved in GOTR?

Jamie: Contact your local school district to see if they have a program already set up. If they do not, contact GOTR St. Louis to see how to get that process started.

For more information about Girls on the Run, please visit:

www.girlsontherunstlouis.org

www.girlsontherun.org

www.essehealth.com