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## Running Toward a Better Future

Over 3,000 'Girls on the Run' packed Jiffy Lube Live Sunday for a 5K race and to celebrate the end of the program's fall season.

By [Mary Rosenthol](#) | [Email the author](#) | November 21, 2011

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A sea of burgundy shirts filled the track as far as the eye could see. Smiling volunteers handed out bananas and water to girls and their buddy runners as they crossed the finish line. Cheering and laughter bursts from the noisy crowd as hundreds of girls and their running partners finish the race.

After months of training, girls from all over Northern Virginia ran in a 5K race Sunday morning. Over 3,000 runners and their families packed Jiffy Lube Live to celebrate the end of the Girls on The Run Fall season.

"I can't even tell you how proud I am of my daughter," said Josh Rosenthol, buddy runner and father of Sybella Rosenthol, a GOTR member. "This place is busier than a pro-football game."

Sybella and 19 other girls from [Centreville Elementary](#) started at 8:30 a.m. A live DJ playing music for the event announced the start of the 5k, which is roughly 3.2 miles. Girls and their running partners crossed the starting line.

"I can't describe how much we appreciate the support of staff and family," said April Kinnan, counselor at Weems Elementary and GOTR coach. "Many of our buddy runners this year are teachers. This is our third year participating in the GOTR program and we just love it!"

Weems Elementary in Manassas has 13 girls participating in the program this fall and Mayfield Intermediate school has 22 fifth graders participating.

The girls meet every Monday and Thursday after school for 75 minutes. Four coaches lead the girls in interactive games and discussions on a variety of topics, following a set curriculum. The girls also ran laps at their meetings in preparation for Sunday's race, where they joined all the GOTR groups around Northern Virginia.

"It was so much fun and totally worth all the work," said Jessica Antayhua, a third grader at Weems Elementary. "The best part was crossing the finish line."

Antayhua ran with her teacher Aileen Legg, who said the race was awesome and that she planned to run again in the future.

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As the girls left the Jiffy Lube Live amphitheater many commented on running again in the future and how much they enjoyed the event. Many of the girls begin in third grade and complete the program in eighth grade.

Younger girls work on self-esteem, fitness and nutrition education during the program, while older girls learn about eating disorders, sexual harassment and dealing with problems that young adults might face.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity for the girls in our community," said Kinnan. "It is amazing to watch their self-esteem grow from week one until the big race. I think this program is pretty impressive."

*More about GOTR: Girls on the Run is an international organization that helps young girls build self-esteem. Studies have found that girls who participate in GOTR programs at their school are less likely to engage in risky behaviors during adolescence, including a decreased likelihood of eating disorders, drug and alcohol use and pregnancy rates.*

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