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# Running on Girl Power

Girls on the Run 5K celebrates healthy eating, fitness.

By Jeanne Theismann/The Connection  
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Months of training paid off for thousands of young girls from throughout the region. Accompanied by running buddies, parents and friends, they took to the streets of George Mason University May 15 for the Girls on the Run of Northern Virginia 5K race.



Photo by Deb Cobb

"This is an incredible event," said celebrity chef Spike Mendelsohn, who ran the race alongside 7,500 other participants. "There is such a happy vibe here and it's exciting to be a part of it."

## Photo Gallery: Girls on the Run



Brad Spiers sticks anti-reflection stickers on his daughter Lauren Spiers before the 5k race they are about to run together as part of Girls on the Run Northern Virginia. Lauren Spiers is running with team Lees Comer Elementary School. (Photo by Deb Cobb/The Connection)

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"This is an incredible event," said celebrity chef Spike Mendelsohn, who ran the race alongside 7,500 other participants. "There is such a happy vibe here and it's exciting to be a part of it."

Also participating in the race, which drew an additional 2,600 spectators to the GMU campus, were local politicians and dignitaries including State Sens. Chap Petersen (D-34), George Barker (D-39) and Dave Marsden (D-37); Dels. Richard Anderson (R-51), David Bulova (D-37), Tag Greason (R-32) and Mark Sickles (D-43); Fairfax County School Board member Ilryong Moon (At-large) and Fairfax City Council member Dan Drummond.

"Girls on the Run is an amazing organization and it's inspiring to see what it does for young girls," Drummond said, following the race. "I am so proud to have an organization such as GOTR headquartered here in the City of Fairfax."

GOTR of Northern Virginia is a nonprofit organization that uses running as a mentoring tool to educate young girls on self-esteem and healthy eating and lifestyle choices. The 10-week program, which currently serves more than 6,500 girls in 200 schools, combines lessons that help adolescent girls in grades 3 through 8 build confidence and develop healthy lifestyles with training for a 5K race.

"These amazing girls are the future powerhouses of our nation," said Mendelsohn, who works closely with First Lady Michelle Obama and the Let's Move healthy eating initiative in schools. "We need to start teaching healthy eating and lifestyle choices at a young age and this organization perfectly complements that."

The 3.1-mile race, sponsored by United Healthcare, Inova Hospital, Verizon, Running Brooke, Washington Gas and George Mason University, ended with a finish line festival that included rock music provided by Studio Rock of Northern Virginia, hair coloring and healthy food and training booths.

"This gives a whole new meaning to the term 'running for office,'" laughed Bulova following the race. "I wish everyone could experience this because there is nothing more inspiring than seeing what these young girls have accomplished out here today."

For more information on Girls on the Run, visit [www.girlsontherunofnova.org](http://www.girlsontherunofnova.org).

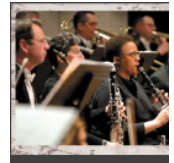
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