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# Manassas fifth-graders to run Sunday at Jiffy Lube Live

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**MANASSAS, Va.** — Come Sunday, the 10 weeks of training should pay off for the fifth-grade girls who are members of the Mayfield Intermediate School's Girls on the Run club.

The 22 girls in the club that emphasizes living fit and healthy lives through selfawareness, goal setting and positive reinforcement, will join roughly 200 other clubs from across Northern Virginia for the run this weekend at Jiffy Lube Live.

Julie Rodgers, one of the three coaches helping the girls through training, said she thinks the girls are ready to go.

"It's a long way to run, but when we started out, we were running and walking," Rodgers said.

Now, they're all running.

On Thursday, all the girls completed a 1½ mile run in a light workout before Sunday's race.

Some finished faster than others, but everyone finished. "They've been pushing themselves and setting goals," Rodgers said.

Yathzelly Ortega said the club offered her a chance to meet a dream she's had for a while.

"My goal is to run a 5K. I've always wanted to do that my whole life," the 10-year-old Yathzelly said.

She also said she's benefited from life training as well.

"The lessons that we get before we run are to feel good about yourself and to know that nobody is perfect. You're who you are and you have to be proud of it," she said.

Rodgers, who coaches the club with Cindy Fitz, Christy Lily, Natalie Regan, three other teachers at Mayfield, said teaching the girls to feel good about themselves is part of the program.

"We've been talking about positive thought and positive energy," she said. "They focus on ... life skills, concentrating on how you should treat others and self-image."

Saharah Johnson said she ran for the fun of it.

Although this year is the first time Mayfield girls participated in the Girls on the Run program, Saharah has



Vera Debbins, center, gets a jump on the pack as the fifth grade girl students begin their afternoon run in the Girls On The Run club at Mayfield Intermediate School in Manassas, Va. on Thursday, November 17, 2011. The students are in final training for the 5K run at Jiffy Lube Live this Sunday as part of Girls on the Run Northern Virginia.

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been through the drill before.

"I get lots of exercise. It becomes easier every year. This is my third year doing it," 10-year-old Saharah said. "It's also very fun. Running around and talking to your friends kind of gets your mind off the pain if your leg is hurting."

Senior reporter Keith Walker can be reached at 703-369-6751.

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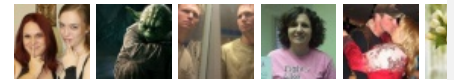


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