

“ Buddy Runner Appreciation Week
Stories from GOTR 5K Runners ”



David & Ella Loudoun County

Spring 2013

One day I (daddy) asked my “little girl” Ella (8 years old) if it was OK to sign her up for Girls on The Run....was it something she might like to do? I thought since running always helped me throughout my life, perhaps it would be the same for her. I could not imagine as an older father what it would be like to support my child on such a quest.

Ella loved training after school and soon developed a great, compact, powerful running style and a positive attitude. The whole family was supportive (sister Grace and mom) and it was great when she asked mommy to be her buddy and train together in this healthy quest. As the 5K approached, mom was not feeling well and Ella asked me to help. But she was worried I would run too fast for her. I calmly explained it was her day and I would follow her pace.

On race day we followed our running-girl to her corral. As Ella prepared, I watched her as any proud daddy. As they called the corral colors we walked toward the start and off we went. How wonderful it was to run beside my inspired 8 year old on her first running event. On a warm, humid day I softly reminded Ella to take it easy, just run as her school-coach trained her.

As we reached the mile 1, I said nothing and Ella just kept focused on the track. At Mile 1.5 we took our water cup and walked as we drank. I could tell Coach Kim had done a great job with Ella’s training because she showed no signs of fatigue even as we passed Mile 2.

It was so hard for me not to hug her as we passed every mile....but I resisted, I resisted! Approaching mile 2.5 Ella was a little red-cheeked and I asked how she was. That was the first time she said “a little tired”. So, without saying anything, she walked a little longer on the next walk break.

For the final half mile, I was overcome with emotion. Just the sheer joy of watching this determined running-girl was more than I could take. But I couldn’t let her be distracted seeing tears roll down my cheeks as we neared the finish. I simply slowed a little as my proud runner crossed the finish-line with her head up and shoulders back. And wiping off my last tears, I hoped: Just the beginning!