



“I am... a Girls on the Run Coach”

My mornings all begin the same. I cross the Potomac River and find myself running along the deserted streets of Georgetown. From there, I pass the Kennedy Center almost to Memorial Bridge that will take me back into Virginia. My run ends through the Arlington Cemetery just as the sun is rising in the sky. I take in the beauty that surrounds me as I listen to my breathing. I am a runner.

Running has been a constant thread throughout my life. It would make an appearance like the rain, linger for a while and then disappear. At the age of 24, I began teaching and running and have not stopped since. My life changed for the better.

While living outside of Washington DC, I was introduced to Girls on the Run. It is a national program that fosters girls' self-esteem and confidence through a unique curriculum and running. Girls on the Run is for girls in grades third through fifth, and the program lasts ten to twelve weeks. Each lesson is designed to develop positive and healthy habits. The principal at my school mentioned that they needed a coach for their team. As I began to read about Girls on the Run, I knew that this was perfect for me. Not only was the curriculum especially close to my heart, being a woman; I felt like it encompassed all the things in my life that were important to me. I volunteered immediately to be a coach at my school.

Our practices began that fall; we would meet twice a week before school. The weather was still warm, but the mornings were bearable. Every practice consisted of a team building game, lesson, and workout. We covered topics



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ranging from gossiping to bullying to how to be emotionally and physically healthy. I was inspired by the honesty and courage each girl possessed. The season would end with a 5K race. This was the pinnacle moment of the season! All the girls, parents and coaches would gather to celebrate and run. The music was blaring, we were all in our team shirts and there was a sea of smiling faces. It is still one of my proudest moments. I felt honored to have been a part of such an amazing experience and team.

Girls on the Run gave me a chance to be a role model not just in the classroom, but outside as well. Running had always been personal, private, something I didn't share with anyone. This program allowed me to see that running is a gift, not one you hold onto, but share with the world. Coaching groups of bubbly, energetic, intelligent girls was a gift. When you watch the news about our country, things seem grey and grim or you read about increase in childhood obesity; Girls on the Run is the ray of sunshine that peaks through the clouds. It is a reminder that good things are happening. Girls are being taught how to stand up for themselves and see themselves as beautiful inside and out. I am proud to be a Girl on the Run.

If you are interested in more information or would like to get involved as a volunteer coach in Northern Virginia, please visit www.gotrnova.org or call 703-273-3153.