

North Country HealthCare Laces Up a New Pair of Running Shoes

By Carri Brandt and Sara Morley

North Country Healthcare has found another way to continue their mission of improving the health and well being of the communities in which they serve. They have been granted the opportunity to administer Girls on the Run of Northern Arizona. Girls on the Run is a 12-week afterschool program that inspires girls ages 8-13 to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum which creatively integrates running. Each lesson uses interactive games, uplifting discussion, and running activities to explore the issues girls face, plan and complete a community impact project, and prepare for the New Balance Girls on the Run 5K which is held at the end of the program. Girls on the Run envisions every girl having the opportunity to know and activate her limitless potential, and be free to boldly pursue her dreams. The program aims to shield against risk factors that adolescent girls face by empowering positive behavior and strengthening connections with positive, pro-social adults and peers. Program evaluations conducted with thousands of girls nationally since 2001 demonstrate that Girls on the Run participants have statistically higher levels of self-esteem, body image, physical activity levels, attitudes toward physical activity, healthy behaviors, and empowerment.

Girls on the Run of Northern Arizona began with a pilot season in 2008, serving 19 girls participating at 2 sites in Flagstaff. Since then, the program has grown substantially. During the fall 2011 season, the Girls on the Run program had over 170 girls participating at 16 schools and community sites in Flagstaff. Fifteen schools served as program sites for the fall 2011 season and include: Cromer Elementary, De Miguel Elementary, Flagstaff Junior Academy, Haven Montessori, Kinsey Elementary, Knoles Elementary, Marshall Elementary, Montessori Switzer Mesa, Mountain School, Pine Forest School, Puente de Hozho Elementary, St. Francis de Asis, Thomas Elementary, Flagstaff Arts and Leadership, and Sinagua Middle School. This past season proved to be a success with the help of 50 volunteer coaches, and more than 220 volunteers and running buddies.

The new program directors for Girls on the Run Northern Arizona chapter are Carri Brandt and Sara Morley. Girls on the Run of Northern Arizona is entirely funded by program fees and the generous contribution of grantors, businesses, and individuals. To learn more about the program visit www.girlsontherun.org or contact Carri Brandt at cbrandt@northcountryhealthcare.org and Sara Morley at smorley@northcountryhealthcare.org.

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