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Brewing a program

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/266803.girlsonrun.article>)

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BY SUE ELLEN ROSS Post-Tribune

Giving young ladies the tools to learn self-esteem is the basis of a national program that will soon come to Highland. Funding for this educational and fitness program got a boost with a recent vendor fair at Bean Counters Coffee House.

Girls on the Run is geared toward girls in grades 3 to 8. The all-inclusive curriculum is noncompetitive for all fitness levels.

The 12-week program meets twice a week; topics include lessons about healthy living and encouraging self-esteem. It ends with participation in a 5K race.

"We are well under way in developing the program and informing the community about what it will mean to the area and to the young girls participating," said Jill Schlueter-Kim, council director of the Lake County chapter. "Our chapter is preparing for its first year of providing services. We stand as a separate, independent (not-for-profit)."

Volunteer coaches help the girls do their best, but not necessarily to become great runners.

Michele Hale of Griffith is president of the Calumet Region Striders running club and also is a friend of Schlueter-Kim. When she heard about the vendor fair, she wanted to help, and sent e-mails to all Striders.

Hale is impressed with the mission of GOTR, and also likes the idea of teaching the girls to relate to life in healthy ways.

"Once Girls on the Run gets established, they will be a sister club to us," she said.

Fifteen businesses displayed their wares during the recent fund-raiser.

"As an independent (not-for-profit), we were looking for a way to bring in funding and get our name in the community," Schlueter-Kim said.

Her committee also wanted to have the fund-raiser at a local business to support the community.

"I love that this fund-raiser showcases women who are successful businesswomen who also give back to their community," she said.

Vendors, who set out jewelry, Tupperware and candles, among other items, donated part of their sales to GOTR. Also, each vendor gave an item to be raffled.

Among those exhibiting was artist Chris Baxter. Dozens of his colorful paintings were displayed on the walls of the coffeehouse.

"These types of events are a great way to bring in the community and raise funds," he said.

GOTR of Lake County is affiliated with the Highland Public Schools Wellness Program, although it is not funded by the schools. The sessions, which begin before classes, will occur on school grounds. Several employees are involved with the program.

National sponsors for GOTR are Kellogg's Frosted Flakes and New Balance. Local sponsors are St. Catherine Hospital and Community Surgery Center, LLC, in Munster.

Local coaches are volunteers and make the program possible.

To learn more

For more information about Girls on the Run, an educational and fitness program for girls in grades 3 to 8, visit www.GirlsOnTheRun.org.

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