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### Girls on the Run: Longitudinal findings inform transformational learning and leadership

Girls on the Run of Central Ohio

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# Girls on the Run:

## Longitudinal findings inform transformational learning and leadership

Girls on the Run Central Ohio, October 5, 2018

### Abstract

Afterschool programs have the potential to teach positive social, psychological, and physical skills to youth participants, but these benefits are not an automatic consequence of mere participation. Evidence-based research evaluating programs is necessary to determine magnitude of impact and explanations for positive season-long change. This study used a rigorous approach to evaluate the effectiveness of Girls on the Run on youth development, including competence, confidence, connection, character, caring (5Cs), and health outcomes. Because Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a positive youth development program, it was also important to assess if life skills were learned and transferred to other social situations. To accomplish study purposes, we asked two main questions:

1. Do Girls on the Run participants differ from a comparison group of girls not in Girls on the Run on developmental outcomes and life skills?
2. Do Girls on the Run participants show improvements from pre- to post-season on developmental outcomes and retain improvements three months after season's end?

#### How Was the Study Conducted?

We selected 3 GOTR councils based on several criteria such as: (a) offering at least 5 years of delivering the curriculum as intended, (b) requiring all coaches to attend annual training, and (c) serving youth diverse in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Study participants came from 15 schools and 25 GOTR teams.

The sample included 907 girls in 3rd to 5th grade—215 girls in GOTR and 692 girls who had never participated in GOTR. Girls completed a survey at pre- and post-season. The comparison group reported on experiences in an organized sport or physical education. Girls in GOTR also completed a survey 3 months after the season to determine if season-long improvements were retained. Surveys assessed the 5Cs, physical activity, screen time, coach autonomy support, and life skills learned. Life skills items (assessed at post- and follow-up) asked whether girls credited GOTR (sport/PE for comparison group) with their ability to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, help others, and make intentional decisions at home, at school, and in day-to-day situations.

#### Conclusions

1. Collectively, findings using a matched comparison group, a longitudinal design, and quantitative and qualitative methods provide strong evidence that Girls on the Run is effective in promoting positive youth development, including season-long and lasting change in competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, physical activity, and life skills.
2. Ability to transfer life skills learned in GOTR distinguished participants from the comparison group, demonstrating that strategies such as those for managing emotions, resolving conflict, helping others, and making intentional decisions are optimized when they are explicitly taught.
3. The intentional life skills curriculum and coach training program offer strong explanations for findings of program impact—running and life lessons are integrated and taught concurrently by caring and compassionate coaches who are trained to deliver the curriculum with fidelity.

#### Mission Statement

**WE INSPIRE GIRLS  
TO BE**

*joyful, healthy & confident*

USING A FUN, EXPERIENCE-BASED CURRICULUM  
WHICH CREATIVELY INTEGRATES RUNNING.

#### Vision Statement

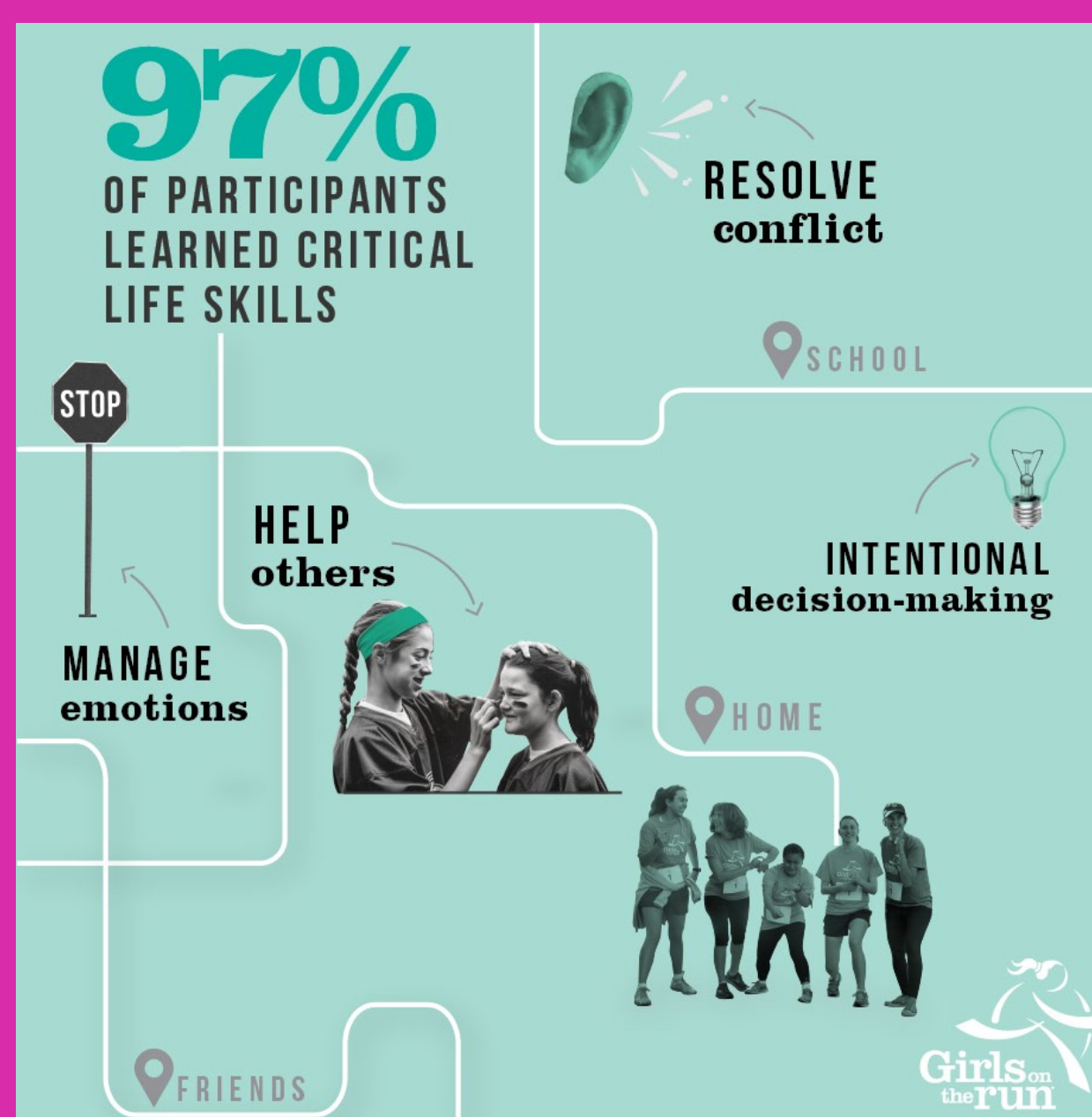
*Girls on the Run is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a world where every girl knows and activates her limitless potential and is free to boldly pursue her dreams.*

## WHY IT MATTERS

Physical activity levels decline starting at age 10 and continue to **DECREASE** throughout adolescence

**50%** of girls ages 10 to 13 experience bullying such as name calling and exclusion

Girls' self-confidence begins to drop by **AGE 9**



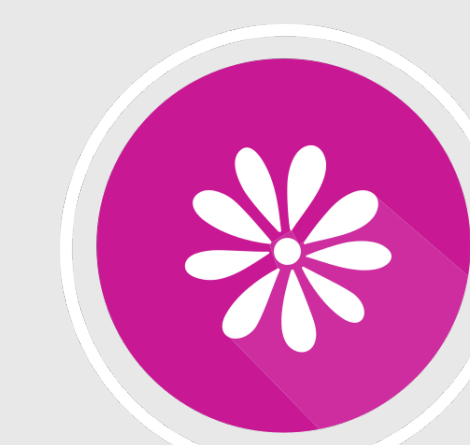
**85%** OF GIRLS IMPROVED IN CONFIDENCE, COMPETENCE, CARING, CHARACTER OR CONNECTION



“This program has given her so much. New friends that she would not have interacted with at school as well as compassion, empathy and teamwork. **WE LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT IT.**”



### Core Values



Recognize our **POWER** and **RESPONSIBILITY** to be **INTENTIONAL** in our decision making



Embrace our **DIFFERENCES** and find **STRENGTH** in our **CONNECTEDNESS**



Express **JOY**, **OPTIMISM** and **GRATITUDE** through our words, thoughts and actions



**LEAD** with an **OPEN HEART** and assume **POSITIVE INTENT**



**NURTURE** our physical, emotional and spiritual **HEALTH**



**STAND UP** for ourselves and others

### Credits / References

\*Results based on a 2016 independent study conducted by Positive Youth Development expert Maureen R. Weiss, Ph.D.

### Contact Info

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