



## **GOTR of Maricopa County Running Buddy Program**

**WHAT?** The Running Buddy Program matches a female community volunteer with each GOTR participant for their end of season 5k. The program is modeled after successful Buddy programs used by other GOTR councils. Our goal is to recruit one Running Buddy for each GOTR Participant.

**WHY?** The Running Buddy Program exists for a number of reasons. First, the organization and coaches were concerned and disappointed at some of the races because the girls drastically outnumbered the coaches and many had to run on their own. This created a safety issue along with a lack of support for the girls. The Running Buddy Program solves this problem. It exists to benefit parents (they don't have to worry about girls being alone on the course), coaches (you can be sure someone is with each girl, cheering her on), and for the girls themselves (an additional positive role model and supporter greatly adds to their experience).

**JOB DESCRIPTION:** The job of a Running Buddy is to accompany and encourage one or two girls through her 5K experience at the Runner's Den/Fiesta Bowl 5K on December 6th. That means running or walking at her pace and encouraging her to do her best, but also recognizing and respecting her limits. Running Buddies are responsible for registering in advance for the final 5k and paying their own race fee which is \$22 if they register by November 28th. **Please note, this is a two-step process** – Running Buddies will first register to become buddies via the GOTR website; then, **after** they receive confirmation they have been accepted, s/he will receive instructions to register separately for the race. This second step is absolutely mandatory for Running Buddies.

**QUALITIES OF A RUNNING BUDDY:** Enthusiastic, fun-loving, patient, supportive, enjoy spending time with youth, ability to run or jog a 5k

**HOW TO APPLY TO BE A GOTR RUNNING BUDDY:** To apply, potential Buddies should visit [www.gotrmc.org](http://www.gotrmc.org) and submit an application. (There is a shorter form for those who have been Buddies before and for parents). I will contact applicants upon receipt of their completed application and provide a note of acceptance as well as additional details and instructions.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q: Can girls' parents, family members or friends serve as their Running Buddy at the 5k?**

**A:** Yes! They should first ask themselves if they are capable of running a 5k though. The girls might surprise their families by how fast or how far they can run. It would be a shame if they felt they had to stop or slow down to stay with Mom. If they feel fully capable to do the 5k, though, it can make for an awesome bonding experience. **Very Important: Parents, family members and friends must follow the same application procedures as all other potential Running Buddies!** The only males that GOTR allows to serve as Running Buddies are fathers, step-fathers and brothers of GOTR participants. Parents and returning Running Buddies will note they can complete the short application form. On their applications, they can also note the name of a specific girl with whom they want to be paired.

**Q: So, are girls responsible for finding their own Running Buddies?**

**A:** Definitely not! Girls (and you as coaches!) should not feel pressured to find their own Buddy. If they have someone in mind, like their aunt who is a runner, then great. But, the vast majority of girls get paired by me with community volunteers. We have a pool of hundreds of amazing women who are eager to donate their time as mentors for our participants.

**Q: Is there an age requirement for Running Buddies?**

**A:** Yes- If the Running Buddy is a sibling of a girl in the program, she/he simply must be older. If the Running Buddy is from the community, she must be in high school or older.

**Q: Can coaches serve as Running Buddies at the 5k?**

**A:** Yes, but we do not recommend this. It is much better for coaches to be able to roam during the 5k, running a bit with each girl and her Buddy. Also, the girls receive a medal when they cross the finish line of the 5k. It means so much to them if it is their coach who is cheering them in and awarding the medals. Interested coaches should submit the application for returning Buddies.

**Q: How can coaches help in the Running Buddy Recruitment Process?**

**A:** Publicize the opportunity to anyone and everyone who you think may be interested—friends, family, co-workers, members of your running group, fellow church members, etc. You can send a link to the site or distribute a more formal handout. We would love your help! In your coach email, I will provide you with a memo specifically for parents, as well as information for others you think may be interested.

**Q: When should potential Buddies apply to be a part of the program?**

**A:** The sooner the better! Running Buddies are assigned on a first come, first-served basis. In the past, we have had to turn away interested volunteers.

***NEW THIS SEASON—VERY IMPORTANT!!!!***

Parents, teachers, family members, friends and coaches (anyone who is requesting to be paired with a specific site or girl because of a relationship with the coach or girl) **MUST** register to be a Running Buddy via a GOTR application **NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 25<sup>TH</sup>**. After that point, community volunteers will be matched with remaining girls.

This deadline has been established out of respect to the participating friends and family members AND to our community volunteers and will streamline the assignment process. Please clearly communicate this deadline to parents and teachers in a timely manner (and give reminders as necessary) in order to be sure they can meet this deadline.

It is our recommendation that anyone interested in serving as a Buddy, submit their application as soon as they know they will participate.

**Q: As a coach, what am I responsible for in relation to the Running Buddy Program?**

**A:** Very little is asked of coaches as part of the Running Buddy Program. I will ask that you provide an accurate roster of participants as that is what I use to match Buddies and is, therefore, very important. I will also ask that you provide program details to parents so that they are kept in the loop. When the event gets closer, I will check in to ask if you know if any girls will not be able to attend the 5k or if your roster has changed.

Prior to the final 5k, I will do my best to provide you with an accurate list of Running Buddies noting with whom on your team they are matched. I will also provide you with mailing labels for each Buddy. Please plan to have the girls write personal thank you notes at your banquet and then mail the cards to their Buddies. These quick letters of gratitude go a long way!

**Q: What if I have ideas to improve the Running Buddy Program?**

**A:** If you have suggestions, please contact me as I would LOVE your input!

**Q: Where can coaches/parents/potential Running Buddies find more information?**

**A:** For more information on becoming a Running Buddy, please visit [www.gotrmc.org](http://www.gotrmc.org) or contact Heather at [heather@gotrmc.org](mailto:heather@gotrmc.org).

**Thank you for your support of Girls on the Run of Maricopa County.  
I look forward to working with you on our most successful season yet!**