



MEMORANDUM

To: Girls on the Run Parents

From: Heather Wheelock, Running Buddy Coordinator, Girls on the Run of Maricopa County

Re: Running Buddy Program

Dear Girls on the Run Parents:

First, thank you for your participation in Girls on the Run. We are so grateful to have the opportunity to work with your daughter and look forward to a very successful season. As you know, the season will culminate in a 5k run. What many girls enjoy most about the 5k is the time they spend with their very own Running Buddy. Following are details about the program.

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. As a coach, I was concerned and disappointed at the 5k because there were ten girls but only one of me! I couldn't be with every girl at once and felt bad that, as the girls separated along the course at different paces, some were left to run alone. The Running Buddy Program solves this problem. It exists to benefit parents (you don't have to worry about girls being alone on the course), coaches (they 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 Race on December 6, 2009. 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. Details on race registration will be posted on the website and will be sent in your confirmation letter, once you submit your candidacy to be a Running Buddy if interested.

QUALITIES OF A RUNNING BUDDY: A person who is enthusiastic, fun-loving, patient, supportive, enjoys spending time with youth and has the ability to run or jog a 5k. We accept parents of girls in the program (mom or dad. Step mom or step dad), older siblings of girls in the program, and other *approved* women in the community who are at least high school age.

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

-OVER-

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

A: Yes! You should first ask yourselves if you are capable of running a 5k though. The girls might surprise you 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 a friend or family member. If you 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 Buddies: you will see that you can complete the short application form. On your applications, you can also note the name of a specific girl with whom you want to be paired.

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

A: Definitely not! Girls 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 a 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: How can parents 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, fellow runners, church members, etc. We would love your help!

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. If we do not hear from you or an interested friend/family member, we will assume your daughter needs to be paired with a community volunteer. In the past, we have had to turn away interested volunteers because we received so many Buddy applications.

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 25TH**. 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.

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

Q: Who can I contact with questions about the program or to get more information?

A: For more information on becoming a Running Buddy, please visit www.gotrmc.org or contact Heather at 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!**