

Living Oakville Beaver

LIVING EDITOR: ANGELA BLACKBURN

www.oakvillebeaver.com

Phone: 905-845-3824, ext. 248 Fax: 905-337-5567 e-mail: angela@oakvillebeaver.com • WEDNESDAY JUNE 20, 2007

Cool to be me

Forty girls from Holy Family School were on the run recently in Woodbridge.

On Sunday, May 27, they participated in the 5 km It's Cool to be Me run held at Boyd Conservation Area to prove it. They were among nearly 500 runners attending from York Region and the GTA.

Grade 6 student Laura Smith, 11, is one of the 40 girls who attend the Grosvenor Drive school in Falgarwood who also belong to their school's Girls on the Run (GOTR) after-school program."

All of our Holy Family girls completed the course, and crossed the finish line with huge smiles on their faces — proud of their accomplishments. Over \$12,000 was raised by the participants for Child Find Ontario, and a cheque was presented to delegates from Child Find Ontario immediately following the race," said Laura's mom, Kimberly Smith who was at the run.

GOTR is a program run by an independent, charity organization, whose mission is "to educate and prepare girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living."

This is its first year at Holy Family where it was introduced by parent Joanne Copeland, with the help of teacher Olga DiDomenico — both avid runners."

Joanne Copeland is the parent who introduced Girls on the Run to our school, and with the help of teacher Olga DiDomenico and 40 very enthusiastic girls, they have made this program hugely successful in its first year at Holy Family School," said Smith.

The Holy Family students involved are in Grade 3 to 8.

The girls were hard at work for nine weeks training to run or walk the 5-km event that's dubbed It's Cool to be Me.

Girls in the program are mentored by teacher and parent volunteers who work to instill self-esteem and strong values through health education, life skills development, mentoring relationships, and physical training.

"They are proud of their accomplishments to date and (were) truly enthusiastic about the (run). They all had their "race kits", which all included a race-bib with the number "1" on it," explained Smith, noting families attended the run, which mimicked a true marathon-type event.

Girls on the Run is a non-profit prevention program that encourages pre-teen girls, ages eight to 12, to develop self-respect and healthy lifestyles through running.

GOTR curricula addresses all aspects of girls' development —



RON KUZYK/OAKVILLE BEAVER

GIRLS ON THE RUN: A handful of the 40 Grades 3 to Grade 8 girls and their teacher from Holy Family School are pictured wrapping up the training they did over nine weeks this spring before participating in the recent Girls On The Run (GOTR) It's Cool to be Me 5K marathon-style event in Woodbridge.

physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

Girls on the Run International (GOTRI) is the parent organization of more than 120 Girls on the Run councils across the United States and Canada.

GOTRI establishes, trains and supports community-level councils with local volunteers.

Volunteers like Smith and DiDomenico serve as role models to the girls through coaching the 12-week, 24-lesson curricula. The curriculum is delivered in these areas through after-

school programs, recreation centres and other non-profit settings.

GOTR was founded by Molly Barker, a four-time Hawaii Ironman triathlete who established Girls on the Run in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Barker began running at the age of 15 — an age when she found herself stuck in the "girl box," but she kept running. During a sunset run in 1993, she found the inspiration that grew into Girls on the Run. In 1996 she developed the earliest version of the curriculum with 13 girls; 26 girls

came the next season, then 75, and so the program grew.

Today, there are Girls on the Run programs in over 150 cities across North America.

In 2007, Girls on the Run will host over 70 end-of-season 5-km events across the U.S. and Canada.

Barker has also published books that include *Girls on Track*, *A Parent's Guide to Inspiring our Daughters to Achieve a Lifetime of Self-Esteem and Respect*, and *Girls Lit From Within*.