

Girls on the Run overcome image-oriented culture

BY PAULLEAVOY
WEEKLY STAFF WRITER

Girls on the Run York Region celebrated yet another success this past Saturday in Woodbridge.

"We had another excellent event," said program creator Rina de Donato. "The program is really gaining momentum." She is the Council Director for Girls on the Run York Region and GTA. It is an after school program which uses experiential learning and training for three- and five-kilometre runs with curricula designed to promote good choices for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living.

Girls on the Run is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping girls stay out of what de Donato calls the "girl box."

"When girls are bombarded by...images daily, they tend to have low self-esteem, they change their physical appearance, they change their attitude, and they tend to move away from their true values," De Donato said. "They're in the girl box."

The girls faced strong winds on Saturday but carried on regardless. "Despite the cool wind we had a fabulous turnout and participa-

tion at the event," said Rina de Donato.

The group was made up of 35 Grade 3 to 5 participants and their parents and families from Newmarket, Maple and Kleinburg.

"Many of the children who participated have never run before or contemplated joining a track team," de Donato said. "But on Saturday, one hundred per cent of the participants completed the five-kilometre walk/run event, with the majority of them running! You could see the joy in their faces, along with the look of pride in the faces of their parents. It was truly wonderful to see."

Through the past nine weeks the girls have learned the tools required to make healthy decisions and also trained for the five kilometre event.

"Their new-found knowledge, training and their dedication makes each and everyone of them a winner and a success," de Donato added. "I know they felt their individual success on Saturday."

Girls on the Run also had the coaches and student volunteers from each site come out and participate in the event as well.

"These coaches and vol-



The Girls on the Run fall session students celebrated a successful race this past Saturday. All of the girls who were registered completed the race.

unteers are wonderful, giving individuals that volunteered their time over the past nine weeks to mentor and teach the girls," said de Donato.

The event would not have been possible if it weren't for the support from sponsors New Balance

Canada, Investment Planning Counsel, Advantage Physiotherapy, the Binder Twine Festival and the Rotary Club of Kleinburg.

The girls were also able to present Habitat for Humanity York Region with a cheque. in the

amount of \$426. This amount represents 100 per cent of the proceeds of the bake sales that each school organized for the community project component of the curriculum.

Carin Bacher, a representative from Habitat for

Humanity, thanked the girls for their efforts and provided each participant with a Habitat for Humanity "team pin".

Visit www.girlsontherun.ca or contact 416-930-8361 if you would like to see this program in your school or if you require additional information.