

“Girls on the Run” program a BIG success at Sheridan Hill Elementary School.

On Friday afternoon I had the pleasure to meet with all of the girls, their parents and Sheridan Hill Principal Lee Pierce that are currently part of the nationwide program known as “Girls on the Run”. I have to hand it to Principal Pierce. I LOVE this program, and am so glad that he agreed to host the program at Sheridan Hill Elementary and let organizer Lola Buckley have a free hand it training and organizing all the girls who participate. The occasion was the annual “Girls on the Run” parent/child bikepath warmup jog for the 5K in Delaware Park. Although the day had started out rainy and drizzly, it wound up being nearly perfect weather for running by the 3:30PM start time. This is the second year that the organizer, Lola Buckley, has invited my wife and I to run with the girls and their parents. There were about 20 girls and their parent(s) in attendance, and all the girls were truly jazzed about the run. The “Girls on the Run” program that Lola Buckley uses at Sheridan Hill was established in 1996 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The “Girls on the Run” curricula, the heart of the program, provides pre-adolescent girls with the necessary tools to embrace their individual strengths and successfully navigate life experiences. The earliest version of the 24 lesson curriculum was piloted in 1996 with the help of thirteen brave girls. Twenty-six girls came the next season, then seventy-five. With the help of over 120,000 volunteers like Sheridan Hill’s Lola Buckley, the Girls on the Run program is now serving over 150,000 girls in 200+ cities across North America each year. In 2013, Girls on the Run hosted 258 end-of-season 5k events across the United States and Canada. The true success of the program, however, is not told in the numbers, but rather in the words of the girls who participate. “Girls on the Run made me realize that I am the boss of my brain.” “I know that whatever I set my mind to do, I can do.” “At Girls on the Run I learned how to be comfortable in my own skin!” Meeting twice a week in small teams of 8-20 girls, the program teaches life skills through dynamic, interactive lessons and running games. The 24-lesson curriculum is taught by certified Girls on the Run coaches like Lola Buckley and includes three parts: understanding themselves, valuing relationships/teamwork and understanding how they connect with and shape the world at large. Running is used to inspire and motivate the girls, encourage lifelong health and fitness, and build confidence through accomplishment. Important social, psychological, and physical skills and abilities are developed and reinforced throughout the program. At each season's conclusion, the girls and their running buddies complete a 5k running event which gives them a tangible sense of achievement as well as a framework for setting and achieving life goals. In fact, our girls from Sheridan Hill will run a 5K in Delaware Park at the end of the season. The result—

making the seemingly impossible, possible, and teaching girls that they **can**. GotR believes that every girl can embrace who she is, can define who she wants to be, rise to any challenge and can change the world. The program inspires girls to be joyful, healthy and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum which creatively integrates running. Their motto says it all...

Learn. Dream. Live. *Run!*

Should you have any questions or comments about this article or suggestions for topics you would like to see covered in the future, please feel free to call, email dhartzell@clarence.ny.us or stop by my office in Town Hall. My door is always open!