

DONOR FEATURE

Girl Power!

GIRLS ON THE RUN PROGRAM OFFERS MUCH MORE THAN PHYSICAL EXERCISE

THIS SPRING, over 1,400 girls from more than 100 teams across the central Ohio region will descend onto Columbus Commons downtown for a 5K unlike any other, with a happy hair tent, face painting, temporary tattoos, and more.

“Every single little person has an entourage that comes. It’s a family-friendly, non-competitive event that is open to the public, so community runners are welcome,” said Jess Sparks, Executive Director of Girls on the Run Central Ohio.

Just as the organization’s name implies, it’s about girls first, then running.

Founded in 1996 in Charlotte, North Carolina, Girls on the Run has grown to include councils in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The local council, Girls on the Run Central Ohio, was formed in 2008 and expects the total number of girls served locally during the past decade to top 10,000 this year.

“We teach girls how to take care of themselves, each other, and be active participants in the well-being of their community through life skills, learning, and physical activities.”

—JESS SPARKS, GIRLS ON THE RUN



Photo courtesy of Girls on the Run Central Ohio

programming for quite some time. With the focus on youth and wellness, especially with the obesity rates for children in America, that really spurred it,” Sparks said.

The community impact projects, which are selected democratically by each team, have ranged from cleaning up a metro park and holding donation drives of personal care and baby care items for the YWCA Family Center, to writing cards for kids at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

“Overwhelmingly, they select a vulnerable population to support,” Sparks said.

In 2017, Girls on the Run Central Ohio established an endowment fund with The Columbus Foundation.

“We knew we were heading in a direction where we needed to invest our reserve,” Sparks said. “We had built that reserve over those early years, and we need to have two seasons of all expenses should we hit a hard time, like a natural disaster or teacher strike.”

“The Columbus Foundation was a natural fit. There were so many positives that we just knew it was the right choice,” said Kate Brunner Quinn, Development Director for Girls on the Run Central Ohio. “Having trusted advisors, people who have a strong reputation in the community for serving the best interests of nonprofits, has been great.”

With a staff of three, the organization relies heavily on the volunteer coaches who oversee each team.

“We are so lucky to have the incredibly dedicated, passionate people that we do,” Brunner Quinn said. “These are women and men who give 30–40 hours during a 10-week time period. It’s not only physically demanding, but emotionally demanding as well. A lot of these lessons stir up emotions for the girls and the adults.”

To learn more about Girls on the Run, visit girlsontheruncentralohio.org.



Photo courtesy of Girls on the Run Central Ohio

In central Ohio, there are two programming seasons, spring and fall. Each season lasts 10 weeks, with two meetings a week, and includes a community impact project as well as the 5K at the end. Two volunteer coaches oversee each team, which is primarily school-based. With schools all over central Ohio participating, part of the beauty is the ability to bring a diverse group of young women together.

“There’s a huge need in the community for girls programming that covers mind, body, and spirit. I think that gap has existed in girl-focused

GEORGE S. BARRETT ELECTED TO THE GOVERNING COMMITTEE

THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION WELCOMED George S. Barrett as a new member to its nine-member Governing Committee of volunteers who provide stewardship for the Foundation and its charitable activities.

Barrett is currently serving as the Executive Chairman of Cardinal Health, having previously served as CEO and Chairman from 2009–2017. In addition, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, the Board of Trustees of the Corporation of Brown University, and the Board of Directors for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He is also chairman of the Healthcare Leadership Council.

In Columbus, Barrett co-chaired the City of Columbus Mayor’s Education Commission; he is co-chair of Future Ready Columbus, serves on the board of Nationwide Children’s Hospital and the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation and is on the executive committee of the Columbus Partnership. Barrett initiated the Columbus Performing Arts Prize and serves as a mentor for the Bright Fellowship to develop education leaders.



Photo courtesy of George S. Barrett

“The opportunity to serve The Columbus Foundation in this capacity is an honor,” said Barrett. “The Foundation and its donors have long been known for a tradition of generosity that enables a wide range of strategic investments that move our community forward.”

Matthew D. Walter, Founder and Managing Partner of Talisman Capital Partners, is serving a second year as Chairman of the Governing Committee. Nancy Kramer, Chief Evangelist of IBM iX, as well as the Founder of Resource/Amirati, is also serving a second term as Vice Chairman.

Governing Committee Members continuing to serve in 2018 are Joseph A. Chlapaty, Michael P. Glimcher, Lisa A. Hinson, C. Robert Kidder, Dwight E. Smith, and Katie Wolfe Lloyd.

Retiring from the Committee is David P. Blom, who completed six years of service at the end of 2017.