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Program urges young girls to run

Training helps build self-esteem

BY SARAH HARDEE | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Girls from at least two Northern Kentucky elementary schools will be on the run next year.

Burlington and Campbell Ridge elementary schools are part of a pilot program through the Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Department to bring the international program Girls on the Run to the area. The schools will participate in the 12-week program through the Greater Cincinnati Council.

"The program is about so much more than running," said Burlington Elementary counselor Neena Ambrose, who will serve as the head coach at her school. "It's also a combination of building self-esteem and promoting a healthy body image."



Girls on the Run was founded in 1996. The program, which is used in more than 120 cities across North America, trains girls for a 3.1-mile running event with workouts that build self-esteem, according to the organization's Web site. The goal is to "encourage positive emotional, social, mental, spiritual and physical development."

The program is intended for girls 8 to 13.

"This program shows that emotional health and physical activity can go hand in hand," said Marsha Ball, a health educator with the health department. "We want to bring it to as many schools as we can in Northern Kentucky."

Because Burlington and Campbell Ridge will be in their first year of the program, they are limited to 12 girls for the first 12-week session, which begins in mid-February. Another session will begin in the spring.

"We're hoping a lot of girls will be interested in the program," said counselor Penny Shaver, who will serve as coach at Campbell Ridge. "I've seen how much little girls benefit ... and it's important we have it here."

At the end of the program, the girls will participate in a 5K run with other girls from the Greater Cincinnati Council.

The council hosted the Flurry Scurry 5K Run Dec. 2, but none of the Northern Kentucky schools participated.

"If we can generate enough excitement and interest in Girls on the Run in Northern Kentucky, our goal is to host our own 5K run," Ball said. "We're looking for more schools to participate."

A Northern Kentucky training day is set for Jan. 21 at Campbell Ridge Elementary for those who will serve as coaches for a school that joins the program.

To sign up, schools can contact Ball at 859-363-2095. Information: www.girlsontherun.org.

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