

# Girls Gotta Run Foundation, Inc. (GGRF) Annual Report 2008

## Introduction

The Girls Gotta Run Foundation is a volunteer organization created to raise money, in part through the sale of art, to support Ethiopian girls who are training to become professional runners. Training to be athletes allows them to stay in school, avoid early marriage, and gain personal independence.

GGRF was inspired by the December 2005 Washington Post article by Emily Wax called "Facing Servitude, Ethiopian Girls Run for a Better Life." Wax reported, "In Ethiopia, getting an education is a true marathon. Girls' enrollment is among the lowest in the world and women and girls are more likely to die in childbirth than reach sixth grade..." She also noted that Ethiopia has the highest rate of vaginal fistulas<sup>1</sup> in the world and one of the largest caseloads of AIDS, forcing many girls to quit school to care for sick or widowed relatives.

Today, because "seven of the 10 top-earning athletes in Ethiopia are women," some girls and their parents have begun to see careers as professional runners as viable options in a country where "girls as young as 12 can be sold as brides by parents desperate for dowry payments." Many who train in order to stay in school and keep their options open, can, with the help of caring others, overcome many of the obstacles in their way. GGRF was founded to assist them.

## Accomplishments

1. We promoted and supported Team Tesfa, which has grown from an original 3 female members to approximately 35. We increased the number and levels of support, from providing funds only for shoes for four athletes, to providing funds for shoes, clothes, and food for 14 members and also for coach subsidies.
2. We sponsored and piloted the creation of a 10 girl team, the Simien Girl Runners, in Debark, in the Simien Mountains, providing funds for 4 pairs of athletic shoes, two sets of athletic training clothes, food and coach subsidies.
3. We recruited attorneys to donate the work for registering our trademark name and logo and worked with them to get the registration application filed.
4. We worked with DC Road Runners to promote and operate the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Larry Noel Race in Greenbelt, Md., as a fundraiser for GGRF.
5. We completed, released and promoted the Girls Gotta Run DVD.
6. We mounted four major local art exhibits, one at the Mansion at Strathmore, one at Artomatic; one at the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum; and one at the Municipal and Community Center of Takoma Park, Md.

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<sup>1</sup> A vaginal fistula is a tearing of the vagina during childbirth that requires painful, usually unavailable, reconstructive surgery.

7. Three benefit art exhibits were done by others for us: a Faculty-Student Art Exhibit at the Mid-Atlantic Women's Studies Conference in March; a student art exhibit at the Julius West Middle School by the art students of Paul O'Connell; an exhibit by Eva Bouzard-Hui of her own work, the sales of which were contributed to GGRF.
8. We assisted and coordinated with supporters who engaged in additional fundraising efforts. These included a fundraising holiday party; a Girls on the Run fundraising run in Annapolis, Md., and the use of a marathon by two local runners to raise funds for GGRF via pledges by others.
9. We continued to market art and products through our online gallery and store as well as to receive donations through a paypal account.
10. We continued to expand artist participation in our events and in our online gallery.
11. We investigated and had preliminary meetings with representatives of some foundations and institutions that may be interested in receiving applications for grants from us.
12. We received some great publicity, including articles in the Northwest Current, the Washington KidsPost, and Helm magazine, as well as in Ethiopian and U.S. governmental agency news sources and in web newsletters and webzines.
13. Even in an increasingly difficult economic climate, we increased our budget from \$6,000 to \$12,000.

## Summary

Studies show that educating girls benefits both families and the greater community by contributing to increased economic productivity, lower infant mortality and morbidity, and longer life expectancy for both men and women. By providing money to support Ethiopian girls who are training to be runners, Girls Gotta Run gives them the chance to stay in school, enhance their future opportunities, and improve not only their lives, but also their families and community.