

## Girls on the Run International Founder and Vision Keeper



### **Real**

-adj. 1. Genuine and authentic. 2. Not artificial. 3. Free of pretense. 4. How one would describe **Molly Barker**

Molly Barker, MSW and four-time Hawaii Ironman triathlete is a visionary. Using her expertise in counseling and teaching along with research on adolescent issues, she founded Girls on the Run®. Girls on the Run is a not for profit organization with the mission of educating and preparing girls for a life-time of self-respect and healthy living. The innovative, experiential program combines training for a 5k event with life-changing and empowering lessons that enhance emotional, social, physical and mental health in 8 – 12 year old girls.

Molly began running at the age of 15 when she found herself stuck in the “girl box”, where only girls who were a certain size, with a certain beauty, who acted a certain way were popular. Girl box who wanted to belong had to mold their bodies and their personalities to fit the requirements of the box.

Molly kept running. During a sunset run in 1993, she found the inspiration that grew into Girls on the Run. In 1996 she developed the earliest version of the 24-lesson curriculum and in 2000, Girls on the Run International, a 501c-3 organization was born.

Today, there are Girls on the Run programs in over 160 cities across North America, with tens of thousands of girls and women participating each year. Molly and Girls on the Run have been featured in many media outlets including People, Runner’s World, Redbook, Women’s Day, O Magazine, Running Times, CNN, MSNBC, ABC News, NBC News, NPR, ESPN and Forbes.

In 2006, Molly was the recipient of several prestigious national awards including Redbook magazine’s “Strength and Spirit Award” which recognizes individuals who are building a better future for all of us, the “Woman’s Day Award” from Woman’s Day magazine which salutes individuals who have used their vision and heart to help fix pressing problems and the highly prestigious “Heroes of Running Award” from Runner’s World magazine. Corporate sponsors for Girls on the Run International include New Balance, Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes, Goody Hair Products and Horizon Fitness.

With the success of the Girls on the Run program combined with her books, *Girls on Track*, *A Parent’s Guide to Inspiring our Daughters to Achieve a Lifetime of Self-Esteem and Respect*, and *Girls Lit From Within*, Molly has become an inspiration and positive role model for people of all ages.

Molly lives in Charlotte, North Carolina and enjoys writing, running and cycling, but most of all, spending time with her two children.

