

NEWS RELEASE FROM GIRLS ON THE RUN - CHICAGO



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Chicago 5th Grader Pulls into First Place for ESPN Sports Award

Two Weeks Left in Online Voting for ESPYs Youth Achievement Award

Monday June 2, 2008 (CHICAGO) – Chicago 5th grader Nichyria [ni-KY-ra] Byrd has moved into first place in online voting for ESPN's first-ever *Earn Your Stripes* Youth Achievement Award as part of the 2008 ESPYs. Byrd is one of five nominees from across the country and the only from the Midwest. She's also the only African American and the only runner nominated. Byrd began last week in fifth place, with only 4% of the vote, but now holds a narrow first place lead with 27% of the vote. Online voting for the award began May 24th and will continue through June 15th, and the winner will be honored at the 2008 ESPYs breakfast in Los Angeles in mid-July.

Byrd began running two years ago on Chicago's Southside as part of the after-school program Girls on the Run, which teaches young girls to run their first 5K race while also developing self-esteem, teaching life skills, and promoting healthy lifestyles. Girls on the Run has launched a national grassroots campaign to encourage supporters to vote for Byrd by visiting their website at www.girlsontherun.org.

"Nichyria embodies the Olympic spirit of every amateur athlete, and we're all extremely proud of the outpouring of support," said Kelly O'Brien, Executive Director of Girls on the Run – Chicago (GOTRC). "I've received e-mails of support for her from across the country and even overseas."

Nichyria will join more than 2000 other girls from 100 GOTRC programs across Chicagoland at the Annual Wondergirl 5K in Lincoln Park on Saturday, June 7th. Sponsored by Takeda Pharmaceuticals and co-sponsored by Magellan Development, the 5K run is expected to draw more than 4,500 participants as the girls are joined by parents, coaches, friends, mentors and GOTRC supporters.

Like any runner, Nichyria is taking all of the attention from her nomination in stride.

"Running has taught me to do my best, on and off the track, and that I can do whatever I dream if I put my mind to it," Nichyria said. "But most of all, I just love to run with my friends. It's fun."

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Program Facts & Highlights

Girls on the Run-Chicago is a life-changing after school program for 3rd-8th grade girls. We use the power of running to help prepare girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living. Volunteer coaches use an interactive curriculum that combines uplifting workouts with self-esteem enhancing lessons that develop the whole girl: her physical, mental, emotional and social self. Young girls are empowered with a greater self-awareness, a sense of achievement, and a foundation in teamwork to help them become strong, content and self-confident women.

Through our 12 week program, we not only prepare girls physically and mentally to complete their first 5K (3.1 mile) run, but also prepare them for life through lessons such as handling bullies, combating negative body images in the media, making healthy choices and engaging in community service. The program culminates in the Wondergirl 5K, a semi-annual run with thousands of participants from across the Chicago area.

During the 2007-2008 school year, Girls on the Run-Chicago:

- Served 2326 girls
 - 33% Latina; 29% African American, 5% Asian, 42% White
 - Over 50% from low income families
- Boasted 100 sites
 - 76 public schools (34 CPS)
 - 17 non-public schools
 - 7 community sites (park district, boys and girls clubs etc.)
 - Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane and Will counties
- Trained 373 volunteer coaches

Girls on the Run-Chicago is the largest affiliate of Girls on the Run International (www.GirlsOnTheRun.org), which serves more than 40,000 girls through 120 local chapters across the U.S. and Canada.

Takeda WonderGirl 5K

Nearly 2,000 girls, ages 8-12, will run their first 5K at the Takeda Wondergirl 5K Fun Run, the capstone of the Girls on the Run season. They'll be joined by parents, coaches, mentors, friends and other supporters from across Chicagoland, bringing the total number of participants to more than 4,500. The run begins at Montrose Harbor Beach House at 9 a.m. on Saturday, June 7th.

For more information or to register for the Wondergirl 5K, visit www.gotrChicago.org.