

NEWS RELEASE FROM GIRLS ON THE RUN - CHICAGO



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Chicago Fifth-Grader Nominated for National Sports Award

Online Voting Will Select Winner of ESPYs Youth Achievement Award

May 27, 2008 (CHICAGO) – Chicago 5th grader Nichyria [ni-KY-ra] Byrd has been nominated for ESPN's first-ever *Earn Your Stripes* Youth Achievement Award as part of the 2008 ESPYs. Byrd, from Chicago's Southside, is one of five nominees from across the country and the only from the Midwest. Online voting for the award began Saturday, May 24th and will continue through June 15th. The winner will be honored at the 2008 ESPYs breakfast in Los Angeles in mid-July.

"Nichyria embodies the Olympic spirit of every amateur athlete, and we're all extremely proud that she's been honored with this nomination," said Kelly O'Brien, Executive Director of GOTRC. "We're asking everyone to support her by voting online at www.girlsontherun.org."

Byrd began running two years ago at the age of nine through Girls on the Run-Chicago (GOTRC), a youth development program that trains young girls, ages 8-12, to run their first 5K race while also developing self-esteem, teaching life skills, and promoting healthy lifestyles. 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. Co-sponsored by Takeda Pharmaceuticals and 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.

Byrd hadn't participated in organized sports before joining GOTR at Ariel Community Academy, but now she's more than just a student athlete, O'Brien notes. As a veteran of the program, Byrd offers encouragement and advice to younger runners, and she's taking the lessons she's learned through GOTR, like how to deal with bullying and gossip, back into the classroom to teach other kids.

"Our volunteer coaches give young girls the tools and training they need to transform their own lives and the lives of others," says O'Brien. "Nichyria has become a real leader both on and off the field, using those lessons to become a role model not just for kids, but for adults to look up to."

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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