

Molly Barker, M.S.W.

Founder of Girls on the Run
Author of Girls on Track

Molly Barker, MSW, a 4-time Hawaii Ironman triathlete, founded Girls on the Run® in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1996. Molly began running at the age of 15 - an age when she found herself stuck in the "girl box," when only girls who were a certain size with a certain beauty were popular; when girls who wanted to fit in had to mold their bodies and their personalities to fit the requirements of the box.

Molly kept running. Years later, on July 7, 1993, she took off on a sunset run and found the inspiration that grew into Girls on the Run®. Using her background in counseling and teaching, her personal recovery from alcoholism, along with research on adolescent issues, she developed the earliest version of the curriculum with the help of 13 intrepid girls at Charlotte Country Day School. The next session 26 girls showed up, then 75, and so the program grew.

In 1998 *Runner's World*, a national running magazine, awarded Molly its "Golden Shoe Award" for contributions to the community through running. That brief mention in *Runner's World* brought Molly calls from across the country and Canada. In 2000 Molly decided to share her brainchild with the world, and Girls on the Run, International,® a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was born.

Today, there are Girls on the Run® programs in over one hundred cities across the United States and Canada. In 2004, Girls on the Run® and New Balance hosted 37 end-of-season races with over 20,000 people participating and attending the races. *People*, *Runner's World*, *Running Times*, NPR, ESPN, and CNN News have featured Molly and the program. Her corporate sponsors include New Balance, American Girl, and Runner's World. She is currently writing a Boys on the Run curriculum that is being piloted in Charlotte, and has just completed her first book, **GIRLS ON TRACK**, published on April 1, 2004 by Ballantine Books.

With the success of her new book (now in its third printing) and a spot on Oprah Winfrey's magazine's "Hi Gorgeous" tour this past spring, Barker has become a highly visible role model for women of ALL ages. She will be featured in an upcoming book, entitled **BE HAPPY AT WORK: 100 WOMEN WHO LOVE THEIR JOBS, AND WHY**, written by Joanne Gordon and released by Ballantine Books in April. Barker is, herself, hard at work authoring a number of other projects.

The true success of the program, however, is told in the words of its past and present participants. "I used to be shy, but now I'm not anymore. I know that whatever I set my mind to do, I can do. Girls on the Run has helped me feel awesome about myself."