

WIN FOR KC | KANSAS CITY

# getting in the game

SPORTS HAVE LONG BEEN THE PLAYGROUND AND PROVING GROUND for boys, but that hasn't always been the case for their sisters and mothers, even in today's post-Title IX world. The Women's Intersports Network (WIN for KC) wants to show girls that the door is open to them as well. ■ Its mission is to empower girls and women through sports and fitness, while providing opportunities for participation in leadership development. But the benefits of physical activity go deeper than muscles and sweat. According to the Women's Sports Foundation, studies show that girls who play sports have a better body image and better psychological well-being than those who don't. So WIN for KC provides opportunities for females to get in the game. BY COLLEEN COOKE

"I AM SO GRATEFUL THAT I HAD THIS RACE AS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE. THE SUPPORT, THE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND ALL THE HELPFUL TIPS FROM OTHER RACERS WAS SO GREAT. I LOVED BEING ABLE TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING SO INSPIRING AND TO SEE ALL THOSE FEMALES WORKING TOGETHER."

— comment from a 2009 triathlon participant



## GETTING THE BALL ROLLING

WIN for KC began as an all-volunteer organization in 1994 and expanded four years later thanks to the interest generated by the NCAA Women's Final Four basketball tournament that came to Kansas City. A group of people – led by Kevin Gray, the president of the Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation – wanted to start an organization similar to the Women's Sports Foundation based in New York. Eventually, WIN for KC was born and now operates under the umbrella of the Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation.

"Our mission is to improve the health, confidence and leadership skills of girls and women in our community," says Ashley Broockerd, WIN for KC's assistant director. "We focus on the benefits that sports offer – not only the physical benefits, but the intangibles as well: increased self-esteem, positive attitude and confidence. We believe there is an athlete inside everyone."

WIN for KC is led by a 25-member advisory board and an executive director. And each year hundreds of volunteers help make events possible.

"Being an athlete is not a measure of fitness; it starts with a mindset, a confidence and a willingness to try new things," Broockerd says. "The result is a healthier, happier and more empowered life. Participation opportunities have always been more readily available for boys than girls. By providing these opportunities for women and girls, women serve as role models to these girls so they can learn to make healthy choices and develop an active lifestyle as well."

## GAME ON

The organization focuses on a few yearly events, and each is an opportunity for girls and women to become more physically active.

### CAMP WIN

Each June 350 girls are introduced to 14 sports and fitness activities at WIN for KC's flagship youth event, Camp WIN. With the help of instructors from local universities, high schools and other organizations, the campers not only learn the rules of the games, but they also reap the ancillary benefits that team sports have to offer like cooperation and self-respect.

### WOW – WOMEN ON WHEELS

After the Tour of Missouri cycling race came through Kansas City in 2008, interest in cycling took off among women. So, with the help of several cycling enthusiasts in the community, WIN for KC led the formation of WOW (Women on Wheels) to provide a one-stop shop for female bicyclists, providing resources and information to encourage women to start riding. It is especially geared toward first-time cyclists who are interested in getting involved in the sport. WOW hosts an annual bike festival and all-women's charity ride, as well as monthly rides around the city.



## A WARM AND FUZZY TRIATHLON

A triathlon – a 500-meter swim, 10-mile bike and 5K run – is an inherently intimidating event for many women. But the WIN for KC Women's Triathlon, the largest all-women's multisport race in the Midwest, is designed to help even first-time triathletes cross the finish line.

"It boasts a safe and supportive environment that allows women to challenge and explore their athletic and emotional boundaries," Broockerd says. "It gives women a chance to step out of their comfort zone and gain that sense of empowerment you feel when you accomplish a goal."

Last year, of the 750 participants, 430 were first-time triathletes, and WIN for KC offers a Women's Fitness Series that includes clinics, workshops and organized training rides for all levels of triathletes. And the event has grown in popularity as the word has gotten out; this year's July 31 race was sold out by March with 850 participants.

"This event is definitely geared toward a first-time athlete," Broockerd says. "The Women's Fitness Series offers a starting point and motivation to become fit and active. It includes step-by-step guidance to prepare them for their first triathlon."

The triathlon has also been officially certified as a green race by the Council for Responsible Sport, and it's one of only 12 races in the country to achieve the designation.

## RECOGNIZING ROLE MODELS

The WIN for KC's annual banquet is held in conjunction with National Girls & Women in Sports Day and is the largest luncheon of its kind in the country. The event recognizes outstanding female members of the Kansas City community who inspire others through their commitment to sports and fitness.

- **LOCKTON COURAGE AWARD** – for a local female athlete who has overcome tremendous obstacles to make a comeback in life and sports.
- **SPRINT SPIRIT AWARD** – personify the "true spirit" of sport as a supporter, promoter or advocate of girls' and women's sports and fitness. This award recognizes the girl or woman who gives her all to sports through an outlet other than participation.
- **HALLMARK CARDS OUTSTANDING MENTOR AWARD** – for a local female mentor who best exemplifies the characteristics of a mentor of female athletes of all ages. This award recognizes women who are volunteers at the grassroots level.
- **DST ADVERSITY AWARD** – demonstrate the ability to redefine barriers despite physical or mental challenges through her participation in sports.
- **UMB SENIOR SPORTSWOMAN AWARD** – for a local woman, age 60 or older, who demonstrates significant athletic achievement, outstanding leadership qualities, and who encourages participation of girls and women in sports and fitness.

## CONTACT

You can help WIN for KC create more opportunities for girls and women by becoming a volunteer, an advocate or a financial supporter.

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