

# STRIVERS: GROWING GIRLS' CONFIDENCE, HEALTH, AND GRIT THROUGH RUNNING

By Paxton Roper

Photos courtesy of Colleen Phelps

In 2009 Colleen Phelps founded the STRIVERS Running Club to help middle school girls build self-esteem and self-confidence and to teach them about healthy lifestyles through the central theme of running. Colleen has loved running for over 30 years, and when she

joined a women's running club to train for her first marathon, she discovered the power of being with a group of like-minded women. Wanting to make a positive impact, she set out to create a club that would help raise the spirits of girls who are going through some of the toughest years of adolescence.

"The camaraderie and support of my running club helped me set new goals, challenge myself to get out of my comfort zone and grow as individual", Colleen proclaimed. "That's when I thought to

myself why don't we have this for young middle school girls when those years often can be best described as uncomfortable, awkward, and sometime "just mean" as girls look to define who they are, what groups they identify with, and who they want to become."

Athletics are a very important aspect of life for both health and social development. Colleen realized





that sports have become far more competitive than they were back when she was growing up. Even for the youngest age groups there are tryouts, cuts and club sports that all demand a higher level of skill, commitment and competitiveness. This strengthening

of the competitive atmosphere has had a detrimental effect on many young girls. In fact, studies have shown that girls who have not found "their sport" by fourth grade are far more likely to drop athletics all together. One of the coolest things about running is that it doesn't set people up to compete against each other but rather against themselves. In running the goal isn't necessarily to beat the person next to you but to beat your best time. This allows the girls to understand that life doesn't have to

be a competition and that it's more important to focus on yourself and what you have than it is to focus on others and what they have.

For Colleen every race is an emotional experience. "When we bring a team of over 40 girls dressed in purple shirts to complete in a 5k I am always overwhelmed emotionally," Colleen revealed. "These girls put so much

**CLUB  PILATES**  
**FRAMINGHAM**  
*Now Open - Free Demo Classes*



DO PILATES.  
DO LIFE.

Rte 9 - Whole Foods Plaza  
[www.clubpilates.com/framingham](http://www.clubpilates.com/framingham)  
 (774)999-0209

**M&M MOVING AND STORAGE COMPANY**



*Let us move you!*

**WWW.MMMOVE.COM • 617-970-4627**



## LOCAL NON-PROFIT



into the six weeks of training and crossing that finish line with them never gets old! To see their smiles, their confidence, and their parents pride is so rewarding to me."

Colleen recommends that everyone experience at least one race. The best way to familiarize yourself with the idea of running a 5k is to attend one as a spectator. Most towns will have a "Fun Run" or some other race often focused on kids. Races have a fun atmosphere about them with music playing, food being sold, and vendors handing out giveaways, which runners frequently refer to as "SCHWAG". Even for those who aren't quite ready to run a race themselves there are many opportunities to volunteer at these running events. Exposing your daughter to the running lifestyle is an excellent way to boost their health and their happiness.

To date over 450 girls have participated in STRIVERS and 100% of these young runners have successfully completed a 5k road race that marks the end of each session. As part of their community service efforts, STRIVERS has raised over \$70,000 for local charities and has donated countless hours to local non-profit organizations including The Natick Service Council and A Place To Turn thanks to our supportive community and the generosity of their sponsors and contributors. To learn more about them visit them on the web at [www.striversrunningclub.com](http://www.striversrunningclub.com).

Their next big event is right around the corner. On Sunday, December 3, 2017 at Brown Elementary School, One Jena Burke Drive, Natick, MA, Strivers will be hosting their 8th ANNUAL JINGLE BELL FAMILY FUN RUN. This 2.0 mile run begins at 10:00 am. The entry fee before November 14, 2017 is \$20 for adults and \$10 for runners 10 years or younger. To register and for more information, visit <http://natickjinglebellrun.com>

[www.paulettesballetstudio.com](http://www.paulettesballetstudio.com)



*Walk in. Dance out with grace, poise, excellence, and passion.*

Enjoy Ballet and More

Prestigious studios near you in  
Newton & Medfield  
781-444-4057

*Home away from home*

Talented, professional, fun teachers



100 Bacon St. Natick, Massachusetts



(508) 653-4851 • [www.baconstreetfarm.com](http://www.baconstreetfarm.com)