

# WELLESLEY LEARNING

## Fit Girls comes to Bates

Over the past year, Bates parents Julie Garvey and Heather McClurg have worked to establish a Wellesley chapter of "Fit Girls," and have in the process created a superb addition to the Bates community. "Fit Girls" is a unique, noncompetitive

program gives each girl the tools she needs to live a healthy, active lifestyle, even if she doesn't participate in competitive sports."

Fit Girls' motto is "Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Heart," demonstrating the interrelationship between body, mind and heart (heart being community service and support for each other), and providing each Fit Girl the opportunity to shine in her own way. Running or walking are easy and inexpensive forms of exercise. By setting a goal, the 5K road race, Fit Girls can use the six-week program to gradually increase endurance. Both walking and running strengthen a variety of muscles and is a terrific social activity. But creating a healthy body is only part of a Fit Girl's journey.

## Bates Beat

By Frank Mazzola Jr.



after-school fitness program for fourth- and fifth-grade girls, combining training for a 5K road race with reading and community outreach.

Medfield resident Sarah Nixon is founder and director of Fit Girls. According to *Runners World*, Feb. 24, 2008, Nixon licenses her curriculum nationally, and runs a grant program that brings Fit Girls to low-income communities. On her Web site, [www.fitgirls.org](http://www.fitgirls.org), Sarah noted that "girls who participate in physical activities have a higher self-image and increased confidence."

Garvey and McClurg latched onto Fit Girls' mission to motivate girls to look beyond their own physical appearance. "Our goal is to help each girl realize that her body, mind and heart are special," said McClurg. Garvey added, "The pro-

gram gives each girl the tools she needs to live a healthy, active lifestyle, even if she doesn't participate in competitive sports." Reading books that inspire, motivate and comfort help the girls gain insight into themselves, their community and their hidden potential. Books featuring strong, smart and bold female protagonists are discussed at each session. Mid-season, the Fit Girls at Bates were reading "Moon Runner" by Carolyn Marsden. "This story is about a girl who doesn't like new situations, dislikes gym class, but suddenly discovers a love of running," explained Garvey. Torn between her friends and her sport, the protagonist discovers more about herself. Founder Sarah Nixon's philosophy



PHOTO BY JENNY SAWYER

Heather McClurg, left, and Julie Garvey, right, with their Fit Girls at Bates.

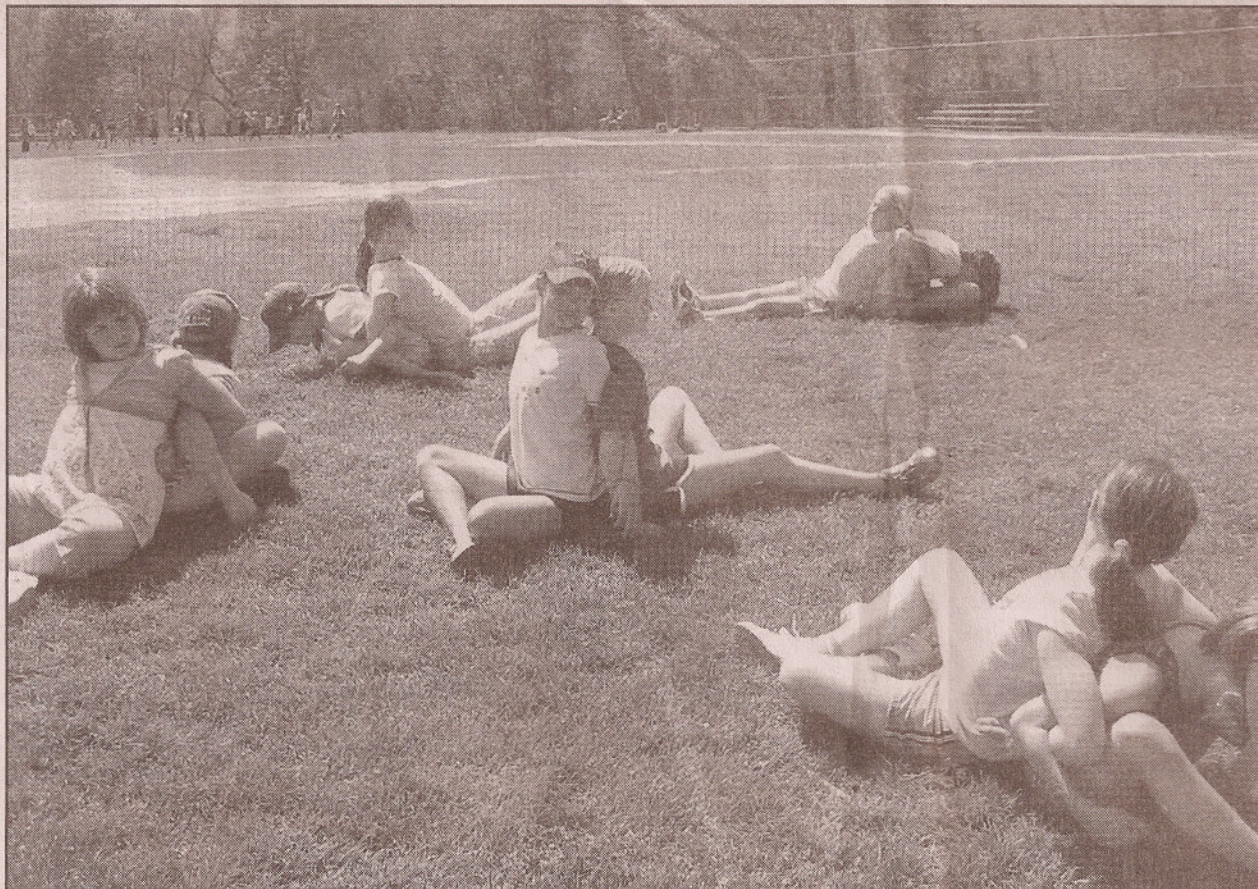


PHOTO BY JULIE GARVEY

## Fit Girls at Bates participants warm up and stretch before their workout.

is that reading is "exercise for the brain."

Participants are also given different quotes to discuss from strong female figures like Eleanor Roosevelt ("You must do the things you think you cannot do") and Margaret Fuller ("Today a reader. Tomorrow a leader"). Fit Girls can be heard discussing books or quotes while running or walking. "Many of the girls are amazed at how fast the 90-minute session passes, or how far they've run or walked because their minds were so engaged," noted McClurg.

Fit Girls' third and final element, "Healthy Heart," represents getting involved in community service while showing support to others. For their charitable contribution, Bates Fit Girls chose "Reuse-A-Shoe," a Nike recycling program that takes old sneakers and grinds down the usable material into three types of Nike Grind. The grind is made from the rubber outersole, foam midsole and fabric upper. The ground-

down material is used for playground and sports surfaces. It takes 2,500 pairs of sneaker to make enough grind to surface one playground. "The Healthy Heart component lets the girls see how their good deeds and participation in the greater community helps others," said Garvey.

McClurg and Garvey pitched the idea of Fit Girls to the Bates PTO, which voted to fund it. Both women live active lifestyles, and have participated in various road races. They provide the foundation for Fit Girls at Bates by mentoring more than coaching. When speaking about the program, their enthusiasm is clear. "The girls are enjoying the program while getting the concepts and making the connections," said Julie Garvey.

"And they're really excited and proud about participating in Reuse-A-Shoe through City Sports," added Heather. "The fact that sneakers are reusable, and

that it ties in with Bates going green this year, really demonstrates the whole greater community concept to the girls."

The girls can track their progress in a log provided by the program. In it, they record their time/distance spent running/walking and track the books they've read during the duration of the Fit Girls season. They also record acts of kindness. By tracking their progress, each Fit Girl can see how far they've come. "It helps build confidence by showing weekly progress," said Heather McClurg.

Heather and Julie are thrilled by the increased confidence their Fit Girls are showing. They are proud of their progress, interest in literature and their community service project. "Our Fit Girls are getting fit — and having fun," said Garvey.

On June 1, many Fit Girls participants took part in the Schofield 5K Road Race wearing their very cool-looking lime green T-shirts.