



Ethiopian girls who join running teams tend to stay in school longer. ("Going the Distance" by Matt Andrea)

## When Girls Gotta Run . . .

### Art Exhibit Benefits Ethiopian Athletes

[The Washington Post](#) - Sunday, March 16, 2008; M16

In [Ethiopia](#), a very poor country in [East Africa](#), girls as young as 12 are often forced to drop out of school and marry. Needing money, their parents sell them to their future husbands. Instead of being in school, these young women spend their days cooking, cleaning and caring for children.

One way to avoid this fate is to be on a running team. Girls who run tend to stay in school longer and, if they train hard enough, might make a good living one day as a pro athlete.

Even if that doesn't happen, the training and additional schooling these girls receive make them stronger and help them feel better about themselves.

In 2005 [Chevy Chase's](#) Patricia Ortman was inspired by an article she read in [The Washington Post](#) about female runners in Ethiopia. She started an organization called Girls Gotta Run, which gives these runners new shoes and the clothes they need for training.

One of the main ways that Girls Gotta Run raises money is through art shows. Participating artists donate half or more of the money they make at the shows to Ortman's group.

The Mansion at Strathmore is hosting one such show now. It features shoe-themed art. Girls Gotta Run benefits from whatever sells.

The team that Ortman's group helps is called Tesfa, which means "hope" in Amharic, a language spoken in Ethiopia. Girls on Team Tesfa have to be hard-working, Ortman said. They run twice each day and must stay in school to remain on the team.

Tesfa is located in [Addis Ababa](#), Ethiopia's capital. Ortman and Girls Gotta Run are working on starting another team, this time in a rural, mountainous part of the country. Their goal is to change these girls' lives -- one pair of running shoes at a time.

-- [Moiria E. McLaughlin](#)