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April 22, 2016

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GAZELLE GIRL MAKES CLEAN SWEEP
Participation increased and Zero Waste initiative benefits many

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – Since 2013, the Gazelle Girl Half Marathon & 5k has offered the opportunity for engagement surrounding Title IX, fitness and fundraising for thousands of girls and woman. The 2016 Gazelle Girl edition, which took place Sunday, April 17, delivered a full weekend of events in downtown Grand Rapids for women to engage around West Michigan’s only all women’s half marathon and 5k. Participation increased 9% from 2014 with 1,649 in the Gazelle Girl 5k and 2,217 in the Gazelle Girl half, close to 500 of the participants making this type of effort for the finish line for the very first time.

“We are thrilled to continue to see an increase in our participation numbers!” says Cara Zerbel, co-event director, Gazelle Girl Half Marathon & 5k. “The Gazelle Girl Half Marathon & 5k was started to celebrate Title IX and fundraise for local charities, but also to create an event where girls and women can train to complete a 5k or half marathon in an encouraging, accepting and high energy environment.”

Gazelle Girl again conducted a Zero Waste initiative toward reducing the event’s environmental footprint, the largest effort of its kind in the area. With Zero Waste stations offering composting, recycling and trash, and staffed by volunteers, many of them students from Grand Valley State University’s Movement Science Department, participants were directed to deposit their waste in the appropriate areas. The City of Grand Rapids then used their single stream recycling to take care of plastics, while Gazelle Girl event committee member, Chelsea Brehm, visiting faculty of sport leadership in GVSU’s Movement Science department, and her Green Team, made several trips to a Zeeland-based composting farm.

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Grand Rapids-based Sole Sisters collected discarded clothing from the starting line and along the course for repurposing in their clothes closet for women in transition training for athletic events, bananas and oranges from the remaining post-event refreshments was donated to John Ball Zoo, and the 80 gallons of water remaining from course aid stations is being donated to assist with the Flint Water crisis.

“The Zero Waste effort associated with the Gazelle Girl Half Marathon & 5k resulted this year in a diversion rate of 97.5%!” explains Brehm. “That includes 760 lbs. composted, 1,060 lbs recycled, 5,000 wrappers/packaging to TerraCycle, 150 lbs. of food donated, 80 gallons of water donated to the city of Flint, 425 pieces of clothing and 23 pairs of shoes for Sole Sisters, and only 55.8 lbs. of trash going into a landfill, a far smaller environmental footprint than most large road races.”

All proceeds from the event will be donated equally to four local charities – Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, the Gazelle Sports Foundation, Kent County Girls on the Run and the YWCA. That amount will be available in May.

About the Event

The Gazelle Girl Half Marathon & 5k began in 2013 as the first women’s only half marathon event in Michigan and remains one of the largest events of its kind in the state. Organized by Gazelle Sports, Gazelle Girl connects women through movement, achievement, celebration, friendship and fun. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Gazelle Sports Foundation, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women (GROW), Kent County Girls on the Run and the YWCA of West Central Michigan. For additional information and event registration, please visit <http://gazellegirlhalfmarathon.com>.

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