

2016 Decade Award

Mary Winzenburg Uran '06

When she graduated in 2006 with a double major in political science and communications, Mary Winzenburg Uran hit the ground running—and she hasn't stopped since. Mary's background in public health and nutrition, her love of running and her visionary leadership have all played key roles in starting the successful Girls on the Run program in the Twin Cities.

While Mary's career path has not been straight, or necessarily conventional, it has been full of great achievements. Mary left Minnesota and worked for the National Association of Attorneys General in Washington, D.C. While there, she helped found the National Attorneys General Training and Research Institute. Along the way though, she began to realize that her true passion was in public health. So she took a sharp turn and returned to Minnesota to complete her master of public health nutrition degree from the University of Minnesota.

"Taking risks and being vulnerable and sometimes going out on a limb have been the places where my greatest opportunities have come from," says Mary. "Whether it be moving back to Minnesota to go to school and start Girls on the Run, or choosing not to go to law school, those risks and times where it might not make logical sense or it's not a straight path—those have been my greatest learning experiences."

Mary's decision to start Girls on the Run with fellow Saint Ben's graduate Kori Fitschen Carlson '04 was a risk worth taking. The organization, which inspires young girls to take charge of their lives, was originally launched in 1996 in Charlotte, North Carolina. What started as a small, volunteer-driven, grassroots nonprofit with two sites in the Twin Cities in the spring of 2012 has grown to serve 1,000 girls and more than 60 sites during the spring 2016 season. Mary's chapter of Girls on the Run has continued to grow and remain successful since its launch in the Twin Cities. After having kids, especially a daughter, Mary sees her work with the organization as more important than ever.

As the current Executive Director of Girls on the Run Twin Cities, Mary is proud that she could create her own job and use the things she learned at Saint Ben's. Saint Ben's instilled in her the idea of empowering women, and that has carried over to her current program. Outside of Girls on the Run, Mary not only volunteers her time to numerous organizations, she has also helped assist other start-up nonprofits, and she sits on the Minnesota Public Radio Generation Listen Founding Board.

Mary's achievements and impact on the community in her first decade since graduating are inspiring to us all, and we don't see her slowing down anytime soon. Alumnae of any age and stage can truly look to Mary as a role model and a leader.