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# Girls Ink

*Inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold!*



www.girlsinclowell.org

Spring 2013

TO:

*In the news!!*



It has been an exciting school year for us at Girls Inc.! Congresswoman Niki Tsongas stopped by to speak with our teens about the importance of women in politics! Our members were given the opportunity to learn about biology by dissecting cow eyes and sheep hearts! We proudly hosted the brand new opening of our Teen Center and we were featured in the *Lowell Sun* newspaper for all of these great events.! Whew!



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**2013 Celebration of Today's Woman Honors Deedee O'Brien**

Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell is pleased to honor Deedee O'Brien with the "Woman of Today Award" at the 2013 Celebration of Today's Woman to be held at the UMASS Inn and Conference Center on June 6th. As Executive Director of Challenge Unlimited at Ironstone Farm since its incorporation in 1983, Deedee has overseen the organization's growth from a small, grass roots non-profit to one of the largest therapeutic riding programs in the nation. Founding the ground-breaking Ironstone Therapy program in 1997, Deedee recognized and championed the benefits of "hippotherapy"-- or "treatment with the use of the horse" -- for individuals with physical disability. She has helped make Challenge Unlimited an industry leader in providing physician-prescribed physical and occupational therapy, especially in Early Intervention therapy for children aged three and under. With a current staff of 16 licensed therapists and instructors and more than 200 volunteers, Ironstone Farm is now a center of rehabilitation for Greater Boston, the Merrimack Valley, the North Shore of Massachusetts, and Southern New Hampshire, collaborating with 26 service organizations to impact the lives of people with a wide range of disabilities and backgrounds.

Deedee successfully led campaign that enabled the Ironstone Farm property in art heated indoor riding property to house after-disabilities. Under her inducted into the Special Exemplary Service Award role at Challenge Unlimited to helping young people involvement with Challenge English and History at Technical School and at the granting program. She is a Hampshire with a Bachelor completed her teaching history at Northeastern working part time at the thoroughbred horses as



Challenge Unlimited through a major capital purchase of the 14-acre, three million dollar Andover, the construction of a state-of-the-facility, and the purchase of abutting school programs for children with guidance, Challenge Unlimited has been Olympics Hall of Fame, and received the from the Perkins School for the Blind. Her allows Deedee to combine her deep devotion with her lifelong love of horses. Prior to her Unlimited, Deedee taught high school Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Lowell High School Night School diploma graduate of the University of New of Science in Occupational Education, and certification requirements in English and University. She also spent twenty years New England racetracks working with groom, exercise rider, and assistant trainer.

Devoted to community involvement, Deedee has held leadership roles in numerous organizations, including the Rotary Club of Andover, the Kiwanis Club of Greater Lawrence, the Pine Grove Grange of Bath, NH, the American Society for Clinical Pathology, and state, county, and local 4-H Youth and Family Development Programs. Her service to the community has been recognized with a number of awards, including the Lowell High School Distinguished Alumnae Award, and achievement awards from the Boy Scouts' Yankee Clipper Council, the Andover Chamber of Commerce, the Altrusa Club of Merrimack Valley, the Merrimack Valley YWCA, and the Rotary International Paul Harris Fellowship.

Girls Incorporated is proud to recognize Deedee O'Brien for her strong leadership qualities, her many distinguished accomplishments, and her devotion to serving those in need. She is truly a 'Woman of Today' and an inspiring role model for Girls Inc. members. Please consider joining us at the 2013 Celebration of Today's Woman, as we pay tribute to Deedee for her many contributions!



**Our INTERNS: Strong, Smart and Bold!**



Pascale

My name is **April Blinn** and I am a senior at UMass Lowell, currently enrolled in the Community Health program. My interest in youth began when I was in high school when I volunteered for my town's Little League baseball and softball programs. I chose Girls Inc. for an internship because of my love for working with kids. I love how Girls Inc. encourages the girls here to try new things, especially with



April

programs that involve math, science and engineering. The idea of having a "girls only" after-school program allows girls the opportunity to learn how to speak up more and not be afraid to ask questions. I believe this is important not only in school, but also in life. During my time here at Girls Inc., I hope to learn more about what is involved in running a non-profit organization. Grant writing and organizational management are a few of the things that are of interest to me. I would also like to learn how Girls Inc. is able to provide its members with such a variety of programs and what's involved in running these programs. Specifically, I look forward to working with girls in areas such as healthy eating, physical activity and stress management.

My name is **Pascale Jean-Jacques** and I am in my last semester of the Community Social Psychology master's program at UMass Lowell. I became aware of Girls Inc. through a friend who was also interested in working with youth in the community. I am also involved with an organization that expressed interest in working with Girls Inc. and as a result, chose Girls Inc. for my practicum site. I knew this would be a rewarding experience and it has been thus far. The opportunity to connect with the girls, teach them and help them develop into young women is something I enjoy doing. One of my primary interests in working with the teens at Girls Inc. is to develop a partnership between Girls Inc. and the SISTERS organization at UMass Lowell. SISTERS (Sisters of Integrity Striving Towards Empowerment, Respect and Success) is an undergraduate organization geared toward the empowerment and development of young women. I believe a collaboration between the two organizations would be mutually beneficial.

Staff Spotlight:

Maritza Grooms

My name is **Maritza Grooms**. I was born in Lowell, grew up in Boston, attended Boston University on scholarship, and graduated in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in Linguistics. I've always cherished the opportunity to give back to my community. Growing up, I was involved in the Girl Scouts where we volunteered with the homeless, sent gift bags to the troops abroad, and visited the elderly. I also became a dance teacher in my teen years in Roxbury where, as part of the junior company, I donated my time to the younger children at the dance center. Since that time, I have known I wanted to work with children but was not sure in what capacity. Upon moving back to Lowell just last year, I found Girls Inc. and knew straightaway that it was where I wanted to be. I began as a volunteer last summer and just loved working with the girls and the organization itself. By the end of the summer, I was offered the incredible opportunity to be a staff member in the after school program!



Being of a mixed race background, African American and Puerto Rican, I feel a very strong bond with my community. I identify myself as Blacktina as I'm very proud of my ethnicity! My background makes it easier for me to get the message out to more girls, who might benefit from being members at Girls Inc., and letting them know too, that they can be strong, smart and bold! As the Latina Initiative Coordinator, I will be teaching the basics of Spanish, identifying the challenges a young Latina may face, and helping to ensure appropriate portrayals of Hispanic women in the media. My goals also include improving the representation of Latina women in emerging professional areas such as science, technology and mathematics. It is important for ALL young girls, despite the odds against them, to know they can succeed, and in doing so, they will become pioneers and leaders in the community!

Female leaders at BARD ran a special career presentation emphasizing different science and engineering fields. They also showed participants how to use Microsoft Excel!



**Fall and Winter Happenings**

Raytheon employees ran a special class on how to use PowerPoint and then showed the girls how to create their own presentations while exploring entrepreneurship and career choices.



Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union provided our girls with fun, hands-on activities where they explored money management, needs versus wants, entrepreneurship and basic banking!



Students from the Greenhalge, Robinson, and Stoklosa schools, as well as members of Girls Inc., showcased their *Photovoice* photos at a special exhibit at the 119 Gallery. Photos included images of "things that need to be changed in their community" and "what's cool in school" exhibits!



*Operation SMART* members engaged in a special two part science program in which they used dissection to learn about the functions of eyes and hearts!



Congratulations to Teen Program member **Katelyn Koslavelon!** She received the 2013 Girls Inc. "Strong, Smart & Bold" 8th Grade \$500 Scholarship award! We look forward to seeing her grow as a leader!