

Girls Ink

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



www.girlsinclowell.org

Spring 2011

girls
inc.

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2011 Celebration of Today's Woman Honors Mary Lou Keenan

Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell is pleased to honor Mary Lou Keenan with the "Woman of Today Award" at the 2011 Celebration of Today's Woman to be held at the UMass Lowell Inn and Conference Center on June 2.

During the nearly 26 years Mary Lou has been a resident of Lowell, she has brought her talent and interest to several local organizations. Mary Lou has served as board member of the Merrimack Repertory Theatre, and she was also a founding member of the Greater Lowell as a Director, as our Board President!



years Mary Lou has been a member of several organizations. She has been an Academy of Notre Dame member, treasurer and board member, and has received numerous awards for leadership, including the Leaders of Distinction — for her leadership, the St. Julie Award, the St. Julie Award Association Board, and the Outstanding Award. With her strong culture, Mary Lou was a long-time member of the Board of Trustees at the Merrimack Repertory Theatre, and she was also a member of SuitAbility. Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell is fortunate to have had Mary Lou as a Director, including three years serving

Mary Lou's mother set an early example of service to the community by volunteering at her local hospital, the church, and by serving as a Girl Scout leader for many years. Mary Lou volunteered at the YWCA, her children's elementary school, and was also a Girl Scout leader while her daughters were growing up!

Mary Lou continued to shape young minds during her 20 years as a mathematics teacher in St. Paul, MN and Tewksbury, MA, and she was also a mathematics education consultant with the Massachusetts Department of Education. Since 1993, she has been a real estate agent with the James L. Cooney Real Estate Agency serving property sellers and buyers in the Lowell area.

Whether in education, business or volunteer activities, Mary Lou's guiding philosophy has always been that it is most important to have good listening skills, empathy, and the ability to make thoughtful decisions. The girls who come to Girls Inc. need to know that their choices in life do make a difference, and that it is important to always strive to be the best they can be!



**New Assistant Program Coordinator:
Marlene Roman**



I am a certified preschool teacher and have an Associates' degree in science with a major in Early Childhood Education from Middlesex Community College. Recently I have enrolled at UMASS Lowell where I am currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Passionate about teaching and implementing curriculum that is developmentally age-appropriate to the children in our community, I am devoted to the Girls Inc. philosophy and mission to empower young girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

My background is culturally rich and I am fluent in both Spanish and English. As the oldest of four siblings and the mother of two young children, I feel I have grown to be a nurturing, caring, dedicated, responsible, and reliable woman and educator. I believe education begins at home and that children need positive guidance in order to succeed. The skills I bring to this strong team of women at Girls Inc. include leadership, hard work, and creativity. My goals are to implement programs which will benefit girls and help them break down stereotypes and overcome gender discrimination. While incorporating literacy within the curriculum, I'm also inspired and eager to teach Photovoice (Cultural Ambassadors), Eco Girls, Book Club, Cultural Cooking, and Japanese Manga Art Animation. I look forward to helping others create and achieve their dreams. These girls represent the future for all of us!

**ECO GIRLS:
learning about ecosystems!**

In the fall of 2010, Girls Inc. was awarded a Women Working Wonders Fund grant to support **ECO GIRLS**, a national Girls Inc. program which gets girls to explore the worlds of ecology, biology and earth sciences.

Participants engage in hands-on activities and learn about recycling, pollution, acid rain, the animal food chain, erosion, composting, and ecosystems.



Experiential activities include 'food chain relay races', experiments to show how plants are affected by pollution, experiments where predictions are made about 'mystery seeds', art projects to illustrate the life cycle of a plant, and creation of an informative poster about acid rain and its effect on our environment.

The girls also participate in an 'Old Paper, New Paper' activity which encourages participants to re-use old materials to create new art projects! The group talks about different ways to reduce, recycle and re-use, and to learn about the significance of processing used materials into new products and reducing trash. Participants also create a **recycling station** at Girls Inc.

The girls who participated in the program this fall and winter were very enthusiastic when learning about natural resources, the environment, and how they can each help to save the planet. Eco Girls will run again this spring.

Registration for Girls Inc.
9- week 2011
SUMMER PROGRAM
begins in April!

Our summer enrichment
program will continue to offer
free lunches, educational
activities and field trips!



**girls
inc.**



Cultural Ambassadors of Photovoice

PHOTOVOICE: Cultural Ambassadors

Thanks to major support from the Stacy Stott Foundation as well as the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Lowell Cultural Council, Girls Inc. is able to implement and pilot *Photovoice: Cultural Ambassadors*, a new twist on an old, but still very popular program called *Photovoice* (created by Laura Lorenz, PhD., a professional writer, editor, and photographer who is currently a senior research associate at Brandeis University's Heller School).

Photovoice is a class in which girls use photography as a medium for expressing what is important to them, and also to their communities. The participants are given cameras to take pictures of both problems and positive resources within their communities. Then, they write narratives about these photographs, show them at a public exhibit, and learn about activism. Our "new" *Photovoice* will involve a video filming component made possible by a total refurbishment of our computer lab (paid for by a significant Parker grant) and recent acquisition of video and graphic software. Dr. Laura Lorenz, along with Dr. Tara Brown from Brandeis University and Lissette Babaian, a Harvard University intern, is collaborating with Girls Inc. and Brandeis University to implement the *Photovoice: Cultural Ambassadors* class.

Participants also actively participate in various discussions about gender roles, and they will also take photos of different forms of art in their own cultures. The girls are also asked to take photos of traditional foods and meals made in their homes, including the preparation and process of making the meal. Throughout the class, girls will learn about the variety of traditions and rich cultural experiences of their classmates. At the end of the class, the girls will showcase their work in a *Photovoice* exhibit so that members of the community can see all that they've done and learned. *Photovoice* is currently taking place at Girls Inc.'s after school program, Lowell High School and Robinson Middle School.



**The joy of giving:
Hellenic Holiday Gift Program**

The **Hellenic Holiday Gift Program** was once again a huge success! ! The generous families and faculty of the Hellenic American Academy provided two of our families with gift cards and presents. Girls Inc. and our families appreciate the continued support and we look forward to more collaborations in the future!



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TO: |



Girls Inc. is excited to be partnering with UMASS Lowell's Exercise Physiology Club! This collaboration will introduce our girls to a variety of fitness, sports and recreation activities. It will also provide opportunities to interact with UML student-athletes who are strong role models. Several members of UML women's sports teams will be visiting Girls Inc. to conduct hands-on activities. Our girls will be actively engaged and inspired to get more involved in sports and fitness. Last month the girls worked with the UML Women's Soccer team and the Step team. Our members learn about strength, leadership and fitness while developing recreation skills! The girls have been asked by the Step Team to be the opening act for their show to be held at UMASS Lowell on April 15th !