The mysterious and the macabre have come to Girls Inc. in an exciting literacy program that highlights the remarkable and intriguing life and works of Edgar Allan Poe. This literacy based program, funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Lowell Cultural Council, includes a Poe theater/film production class and a book creations class, both of which involve the exploration of Poe’s unique and famous stories and poems.

In the Poe Theater program, participants focus on a specific Edgar Allan Poe story or poem and create their own Strong, Smart and Bold version to be turned into either a film production or a play. Girls learn not only about Poe’s literary works but about theater production, set and costume design, filming and editing, script writing and teamwork. During the spring of 2013, girls in our Tell Tale Poe Theater Program made a short film of their rendition of “A Tell Tale Heart”. Girls Inc. plans on hosting a special event in the early fall to showcase this creative film to both families and community members. Members of our summer program have also worked on their own theater production of “The Masque of the Red Death”, which they presented as a play at the end of the summer program.

Poe Book Creations gives girls the opportunity and tools to become authors and illustrators of their very own stories and poems. During the class, girls learn about Poe’s history and his life story, including his visits to Lowell, discover his different styles of writing, read some of his most famous tales of mystery and madness, and then, using blank bare books and a guide on writing scary stories, craft their own books filled with stories, poems and illustrations of their own creation.

The members of Girls Inc. are very excited to continue working on Edgar Allan Poe inspired “spooky” creations throughout the rest of the school year. The girls will continue building their writing skills while engaging in great story telling! Tell Tale Poe, indeed!
Summer 2013 brought new and exciting programs, field trips and adventures for members of Girls Inc.!

The girls made many memories and soaked up the sun at the South Common swimming pool on Mondays and Fridays. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, they went on local ‘mini’ field trips and participated in group-time excursions.

Girls Inc. members also enjoyed complimentary lunches provided by our friends at the Healthy Summer Lunch Program. Thursdays brought many unique field trip destinations including Maudslay State Park, the Palace Theatre, Museum of Science, Drumlin Farm, Peabody Essex Museum, and our all-time favorite — George’s Island!

Afternoons were packed with hands-on engaging programs that focused on science, theater, diversity, fitness, nutrition, cooking and literacy for girls ages 5-14. Action-packed and fun-filled activities included:

- Latina Dancing
- In the Cucina
- In the Lab
- This is My Body
- Young Scientists
- Earth Conscious
- Chef It Up
- Culture Shock
- Media Critics
- Engineering
- Express Yourself
- Chopped
- Edgar Allan Poe Theater
- Grass Roots Gardening
- Around the World Multicultural Art

In addition to being given opportunities in the arts and sciences, our girls also learned and developed their reading and writing skills through a summer learning initiative in collaboration with BOSTnet and United Way.

Girls Inc. proudly introduces our Strong, Smart and Bold Summer Program Staff:

Katelyn Adams (Program Coordinator), Kelsey Jones, Danielle Aleman, Maritza Grooms (Teen Coordinator), Kelsey Barowich (former Girls Inc. member, recipient of National Girls Inc. and Loretta Duncan Scholarships), Marlene Roman and Allison Hajjar.

Most of our staff have recently graduated with B.A. and M.A. degrees. They are highly trained in girls’ growth and development, intentional program planning and implementation, conflict resolution and group management.

They have also been educated on how to incorporate literacy and STEM into fun and engaging programs geared toward building self-esteem. The staff also hold First Aid and CPR certifications. Our Summer Program Specialists are enthusiastic and thrilled to be spending their summer with the Girls Inc. members.
Hello everyone, my name is Christa Brown and I am excited to be a part of the "Strong, Smart, and Bold" family!

Before becoming the Outreach Coordinator at Girls Inc., I helped to lead, facilitate and develop interactive programs with the Tsongas Industrial History Center right here in Lowell, MA as a museum teacher. It was there that my love for working with children in both formal and informal settings was nurtured. I discovered my love for helping children, for helping them to develop into independent thinkers. I also became aware that topics such as history and science, which unfortunately are often labeled as "boring", can actually be made fun with the proper approach and a sprinkle of humor. I also served as a Fine Arts Assistant with the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Haverhill, aiding children in being able to establish their own sense of self and developing their own creativity.

I graduated from Longwood University in May 2012 with a B.F.A. in Theatre and a Concentration in Performance (in conjunction with Communication Studies course work). I have a passion for the arts and use it as a gateway for communication and critical thinking. I truly believe that passion and education work hand in hand.

During my years at LU, I served as a Peer Mentor, organizing programs that helped to acclimate new students to the university environment. In that role, I worked with my faculty advisor on course curriculum development. I served on numerous committees and nationwide organizations such as the Student Diversity and Inclusion Council, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., and Alpha Psi Omega Fraternity. These experiences reinforced the power of people coming together to achieve a common goal. There is a certain solidarity that develops in an all-female environment, a dedication to learning, to forging friendships, and most importantly, to realizing that the only limits that exist are those that we place on ourselves.

I look forward to being a witness to the wonder that is Girls Inc. and being a part of it myself. And the treat is, as Outreach Coordinator, I have the privilege of sharing that wonder with every girl with whom I come in contact. Although I have only just begun, it is easy to see how wonderful the "Strong, Smart and Bold" lifestyle can be.

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Mill City Grows, a new Food Justice initiative in Lowell, is thrilled to be working with Girls Inc.! During this growing season the project expanded our members’ experiences and knowledge of healthy, homegrown food. Spearheaded by Katie Kennedy, a Middlesex Community College nutrition student (and Mill City Grows volunteer garden coordinator), this collaboration has blossomed into an exciting program that has the potential to change the diets and food choices of its young participants.

In early April, seven girls between the ages of 10 - 12 were selected to participate in the Grass Roots Growing program, which Katie led with Girls Inc. Program Specialist Ashley Carey. The group met at Mill City Grows’ Rotary Park Community Garden in the Back Central neighborhood, where they had a plot to grow whatever veggies they chose. On the very first day of the program, girls brainstormed their crop plan. Katie knew she had her work cut out for her when one of the students requested “a pizza tree”. But just as Katie predicted, her students’ food choices started to change as they spent more time in the garden. The same child who requested pizza was now munching on kale, and imagining desserts that could include this nutrient-dense vegetable!

The school year program at Rotary Park Community Garden was such a hit that the girls decided to continue the growing during the summer and they built a garden right here at Girls Inc.! In two garden beds, they cultivated tomatoes, peppers and cilantro to make fresh salsa, which they compared to store-bought salsa. In the future, they also want to grow corn to make their own corn chips! Other crops included edamame, collard greens, broccoli, strawberries, and of course kale, which turns into a favorite stack: baked kale chips.

In Katie’s ideal world, every child has access to a garden and a kitchen and participates actively in creating the food that they eat. Mill City Grows is honored and delighted to be working with such an inspiring volunteer and to have the opportunity to build partnerships with Girls Inc. to expand growing opportunities for Lowell youth. For more information about Mill City Grows and ways to get involved, please visit: www.MillCityGrows.org
Member Spotlights

Mary Sampas Literacy Award!

We are pleased to announce that the winner is **Autumn Salfity**! Autumn is an avid reader and will soon be a 6th grader at the Butler School. She enjoys delving into a great mystery or action-packed adventure novel, and her favorite series are the Hunger Games and Percy Jackson. Her love for literacy is evident in her participation in various programs and classes such as *Come on Vamanos, What the Dickens!*, and her script writing for *Tell Tale Poe*.

Along with reading and writing, Autumn’s favorite subjects are art and science. She has many hobbies including playing soccer, horseback riding, and doing puzzles. Autumn states: “...I have learned that although there are challenges, there is also a pot of gold at the end of each rainbow.” We are all very proud of Autumn and her accomplishments and look forward to seeing her grow while at Girls Inc.

Member of the Year!

**Destinee Melendez** truly embodies what it means to be strong, smart, and bold. Through her mentorship with her peers, it is evident that she lives by the Girls Inc. Bill of Rights. Destinee confidently takes risks by engaging in a wide variety of programs, both at Girls Inc. and at school. She takes pride in her work and accomplishments and is not afraid to express herself with originality and enthusiasm.

Destinee’s spirit shines through and her positive energy impacts others. “I really enjoy the fact that there are a lot of great staff that appreciate and care for me. Girls Inc. has inspired me to do the things that I enjoy, like dancing, singing, gymnastics, art, and doing well in school.” We have all watched Destinee grow during the five years she has been attending Girls Inc. She will soon enter the 7th grade at the Robinson School and will be a new member of the teen program at Girls Inc. In addition to being awarded Member of the Year, she was honored with the Mary Sampas literacy award in 2011 and has been recognized as our Member of the Month on multiple occasions. We are all proud of Destinee and look forward to seeing what she accomplishes in the future!