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

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Fall 2016

Operation SMART Outreach Programs

The Girls Inc. Outreach Program is on the rise! Through generous support from individual donors and foundations, we are achieving our strategic goal of expanding our Outreach Program and reaching more girls in the Greater Lowell area by providing our classes for free in local schools and community centers. Outreach sites find value in our programs because they truly maximize out-of-school time by providing research-based, intentional and compensatory curricula, which are tailored to meet the needs of the girls at each site. The most popular Outreach program, Operation SMART (OpSMART), allows the girls to enjoy the world of S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), get messy, and expand their minds through exploration. This program helps girls develop enthusiasm for and skills in S.T.E.M. through hands-on, engaging science activities.

One of the favorite OpSMART experiments includes “Color Changing Milk,” an experiment in which the girls make “fireworks” in the milk by using food coloring and dish soap to break down the molecules and decrease surface tension! Girls in the Outreach program have a chance to meet “Zelda,” a soft, cloth teaching doll with flaps that open to reveal her internal organs, during anatomy classes where the girls learn about physiology, health and hygiene, and the roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals as they become surgeons who “operate” on the doll. The girls also participate in dissection activities such as dissecting cow eyeballs and owl pellets. Operation SMART also puts an emphasis on the engineering design process, including a civil engineering activity where the girls learn about civil engineers and other workers needed to construct a bridge, the types of bridges, and complete two bridge building challenges including engineering a sturdy bridge out of everyday materials and by using K’NEX bridge building sets. The Operation SMART program also partners with women working in S.T.E.M. fields, and exposes girls to female role models so that they come to view these careers as realistic and exciting options for themselves.

A sincere thank you to the following foundations for making it possible for us to ensure that as many girls as possible are receiving the tools and resources to become healthy, educated and independent: Community Development Block Grant, Kinder Morgan Foundation, National Grid, Miriam Fund of the CJP and the Battles Foundation Inc.

An exciting addition to our OpSMART Programs this year is our new partnership with The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education and Resilience team at McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Together, Girls Inc. and PEAR are working to outfit PEAR’s Dimensions of Success Observation Tool (DoS) with a gender lens so that it better aligns with the mission and goals of Girls Inc. This DoS tool will be used to track and enhance program quality in both the Afterschool and Outreach programs!
Summer Programming Highlights 2016

Thanks to our altruistic sponsors, Summer 2016 at Girls Inc. was filled with excitement and education. Funding provided an onsite program that was packed with creative pursuits, life skills learning, dramatic enterprises and scientific exploration. Our Youngers learned the art of dance, as well as, the value of self-expression in Fancy Feet and Artsy Starts. They even produced some of their own music and theater in programs like Musical Muses and Dazzling Drama. While younger members explored the arts, older members were experiencing real life situations while they planned and prepared their own business plans and spearheaded a public service campaign promoting wellness and mental health. In their choices, Olders built strong bodies in programs like Sporty Sisters and Summer Olympics and they built sharp minds while exploring the art of storytelling in Soulful Stories.

Due to generous support from The Miriam Fund, both age groups were able to have STEM exposure, on and offsite. Younger members learned about chemical reactions and molecular science in the programs Crazy Chem and Got Science?. Olders were exposed to the details of the scientific method in Lab Ladies, through a variety of detailed experiments including lessons on viscosity, electricity and even a real life dissection. Offsite, on field trip days, Olders visited the Boston Museum of Science, an annual favorite, and they had the opportunity to experience marine sciences at the New England Aquarium thanks to passes donated by National Grid. With support from the Community Development Block grant, Youngers took a, first time ever, trip to the SEE Science Center, in Manchester. Girls got a zero-gravity experience in their Moon Walk Exhibit, learned about life on a submarine in a replica and even learned about the science of sound and music. After a morning at the Center, members headed down the street to Amoskeag Fishways and learned about all manner of animal life on the Merrimack, through interactive workshops provided by their staff.

Charitable sponsorship even allowed Girls Inc. to utilize our many community resources and plan an exceptional “mini field trip” program. Each Wednesday, members had the opportunity to go offsite into our community and learn about Lowell, and its many opportunities, past and present. Youngers visited the Quilt Museum for a lesson in textile history, Boarding House Park for zoology presentations organized by the National Parks, and the Pollard Memorial Library for story time, tours, and information about library resources available to them. Olders were exposed to the value of community service at organizations like Community Family and the Hurd Street Food Pantry. Our oldest members were even able to tour local campuses at UMass Lowell and MCC and begin thinking about the many options for their futures, available to them here in Lowell.

Members were even provided with a series of special programs, supported by our many partners, throughout the Summer. The Boston Museum of Science piloted their new classroom program “Blizzards” with our members and the Mahoney Foundation joined us to paint safe homes for local birds and raise awareness for domestic violence. Some female scientists paid us a visit for a day from the Charles River Labs and spent the afternoon with older girls discussing career option in STEM and participating in our own STEM Programming. Girls Inc. was even able to take a group of our members to the Beneski Exhibit at UMass Amherst and provide a meeting and discussion with a real life paleontologist thanks to our amazing Executive Director.

This summer was an excellent interlude for all our members, particularly those who were able to attend through a privately sponsored campership, provided by our many gracious donors. We ended the summer program with a “Relaxation Romp”, where our members practiced stress management techniques and built high self esteem for the coming school year.

Thank you so much to all our sponsors and donors for providing our incredible staff with the means to give our members an extraordinary experience this year; and an especially big thanks to each and every girl who helped us make memories this summer.
We would like to extend a special thank you to our "Friends" whose generosity during the past year enabled us to grow and continue to serve more girls from Greater Lowell.

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Photo courtesy of Dacey Zouzas
A Strong, Smart & Bold Preview of What’s to Come...

After-School Center Programs

A new school year is always an exciting time for Girls Inc. This year we are so thrilled to be developing our community relationships, particularly with local colleges and our parent engagement efforts. Coming up in the Fall will be tours of the CORE Labs at UMASS Lowell, where our members will get private demos of the incredible work the N.E.R.V.E. Lab is doing with N.A.S.A. Service Learning Students from the Health Sciences Department at UML have partnered with Girls Inc., again, to provide a Nutrition and Wellness Program to members. From the Middlesex Community College Service Learning Department, students are writing parent newsletters and collaborating with Lowell General Hospital to host a parent information night, providing resources for families coping with bullying.

While our team of remarkable coordinators and directors work to expand our special programs, our incredible staff are working to build programs that are intentional, diverse and inclusive. Among some of the new programs beginning in the Fall are Worldly Wise, (journalism program), and Passion Project, (civic engagement enterprises).

We are so delighted with the exceptional selections we are able to offer to our members and their families this semester. We cannot wait to share the experiences and memories from this year with all our gracious donors, sponsors and friends, who provide us with the means to offer our members such extraordinary opportunities.

Teen Center Programs

The Girls Inc. Carol S. Duncan Teen Center has an exciting year lined up! This year will be divided into three semesters: Strong, Smart & Bold, of course. A few programs will be run throughout the year such as Informed & In Charge, emphasizing healthy relationships; and an adventure sports and stress management program called Girl enCourage. Additionally, the teens will be getting an awesome chance to be “producers-in-training” in collaboration with Lowell Telecommunications Corp., learning filming and editing skills as well as creating their own short film. Some other fantastic programs include Crime Scene Investigators (STEM), Equal Earners Savvy Spenders (financial literacy), and In Our Own Hands, (social change and leadership). Girls Inc. is in the business of building incredibly informed young women who can take on the world with confidence and pride!

Outreach Programs

The Outreach Program is looking forward to serving many schools and community centers this school year. Sites include Coalition for a Better Acre, Morey Elementary School, Reilly Elementary School, four Tewksbury Elementary schools and more! The girls at these sites are enjoying the world of S.T.E.M. through exploration in our Operation SMART program! This fall, the girls have many holiday-themed S.T.E.M. activities to look forward to such as learning about the different parts of a bone in Edible Super Skeletons and about chemical reactions in Candy Cane Chemistry! We are excited to announce that our “Grandparent Program” is growing! This school year, two groups of girls will be visiting Chelmsford Crossings and The Atrium senior living communities. The girls will be socializing and getting to know the residents through a variety of activities, such as playing games, making crafts, and creating biography books! This is a wonderful program which builds participants’ communication skills, self-esteem, increases community engagement and will empower, educate and bond generations.
The Girls Inc. Counselor-in-Training Program has become an essential part of the Summer Enrichment Program, completing its third successful summer in a row! Each year, the program brings an opportunity for new teen members, returning CITs, as well as newly-turned 15 year olds from the After School Program to learn and develop the skills that will prepare teens for the working world. The CIT Program is a summer job readiness program for teen girls ages 15-18 where teens get hands-on work experience assisting the staff in running their activities, serve as mentors and role models for the younger members, and participate in the Job Ready Workshop, a Girls Inc. National curriculum.

The Job Ready Workshop teaches teens the fundamentals of achieving their career goals through first identifying qualities and skills they already have, matching those skills with their interests to potential careers. They then learn about ways to look for jobs, how to get the job, and what to do once they have the job. The CITs had a great time participating in game show activities to test their knowledge on how to properly interview for a job they want, figuring out what an excellent resume looks like and building their own, and acting out scenarios of workplace dilemmas and identifying appropriate ways to handle those situations. They also learned stress management skills for when the work-life balance can get overwhelming. After taking this workshop, one of the CITs was able to actually get a part time job using the skills she learned, and was able to successfully balance being a CIT and working at her new job!

This year, thanks to the incredible generosity of donors, the CITs were able to begin their training at Ironstone Farm in Andover. In the past, the Girls Inc. Teen Program has witnessed the impact of the Ironstone Teen Leadership Program that usually runs during April Vacation for the last three years. Girls Inc. was able to build upon the success of that program, incorporating the Equine Encounter into the first week of training for the CITs where they learned the importance of working as a team, using effective communication, and conflict resolution. They reflected on what it means to be a leader and a role model while discovering their own strengths as well as skills they would like to work on.

They had the chance to consider the perspective of the younger members by considering how different the viewpoint of a horse is with the aid of a horse mask. The horses were great participants in helping the CITs learn about themselves and how they might behave in challenging situations.

Girls Inc. is grateful for Ironstone Farm, Monique Morimoto, and Melissa Edelmann for their continued support in our mission to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold!
Graduating Seniors are 2016 Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to Shelby Phillips and Nicole Forest – two former Girls Inc. members and CIT’s who graduated from Lowell High School and received Girls Inc. Scholarships!

Nicole (right) graduated with a 3.80 G.P.A. and will be attending Sacred Heart University in Connecticut to study Health Sciences/Nursing. She has been a member at Girls Inc. since 2014, starting as a CIT and participating in various Teen Program activities. She is a very dedicated, hard working, independent young woman who is sure to be successful pursuing her career!

Shelby (left) graduated with a 4.29 G.P.A. and will be attending UMASS Amherst to study Biology/STEM fields. Shelby has been an active member at Girls Inc. since 2005, became a CIT in 2014 and has volunteered her free time here at Girls Inc. She is very passionate about scientific research and is published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. She is a very determined, motivated, diligent young woman who will absolutely be successful in her field of study and career aspirations!

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