2019 Celebration of Today’s Woman
Honors Lura Smith

Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell is pleased to honor Lura Smith with the “Woman of Today” Award at the 2019 Celebration of Today’s Woman on June 6, 2019 at the UML Inn & Conference Center.

Lura’s distinguished career in marketing, public relations, and higher education, her leadership in local philanthropy, and her tireless efforts to support our community provide a wonderful role model for Girls Inc. members to celebrate. A graduate of the School of Management at Lesley University, Lura is a woman who brings countless talents, passionate commitment, and enthusiasm for life to every endeavor that she undertakes. Never content with the status quo, she takes notice of the needs of the people around her, gives them a voice, and works to make things happen. For 23 years in her former position as Assistant to the President at Middlesex Community College (MCC), Lura served as a representative of the organization at numerous events, while providing support to the President. In 1999, she collaborated with the college in the creation of the Lura Smith Fund, whose mission is to provide scholarship opportunities, programs and events that reflect the life and legacy of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., including the highly successful annual Lura Smith Fund Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration which has grown to include over 300 guests representing the Merrimack Valley, New Hampshire, and Greater Boston areas, the establishment of the “Living the Dream Award,” and the awarding of over $50,000 in scholarships to date.

Lura credits her loving home and the vibrant community of her childhood in New Orleans for empowering her with the wisdom and confidence she has needed to thrive as a woman of color. There in the 1950s and 1960s, she withstood the trying forces of racial segregation. This forged her unwavering commitment to honor those who encouraged her to dream without limits. Lura embodies a personal philosophy that values the blessings of faith, family, friends, and meaningful work, and looks to share these blessings with others. These are values that she and her husband, Robert, have passed on to their two sons, and now continue to share with their grandchildren.

Since becoming a Lowell resident in 1970, Lura has made her mark on the local community in so many positive ways. She has served on numerous non-profit boards. Her tireless work for the community has earned her numerous awards and recognitions.

A talented singer, Lura joyfully shares her love of music, performing with her band monthly to standing-room only crowds at the Athenian Corner and at other local events where her infectious personality and love of life shines forth. We are proud to honor Lura with the 2019 Woman of Today Award. Her life of commitment to furthering the ideals of peace, equality, and reconciliation are a living example for Girls Inc. members of what it means to be … Strong, Smart, and Bold. For event details, visit https://girlsinclowell.org/be-inspired/celebration/
After School Center

For more than a century, it has been the primary goal for Girls Inc. to provide a safe, mentoring space for girls to discover their potential, prepare for success, and grow into strong, smart, and bold leaders. In that time, the organization has continually evolved to meet the serious and changing needs of girls. In 2019, Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell continues to refine its center, programming and structure to provide the highest quality of care and education.

As a new generation of members enroll, a more cultivated and specific program has been implemented to meet the needs of the iGeneration. Girls Inc. programs are built from research-based, hands-on criteria. They are developed to deliver the most impactful outcomes through age-appropriate skill development and instruction. To better achieve this goal, Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell restructured its program delivery; separating members into three age specific groups.

Members aged five to six are receiving targeted instruction to develop the foundational skills necessary to succeed through childhood. The early education program focuses directly on improving early literacy skills, self-regulation capabilities, interpersonal interactions, and gross motor mastery. Funded by a National Girls Inc. grant, Little Learners improves skills such as, phonics, letter recognition, vocabulary, and fluency. Members experience these learning activities through interactive story time, hands-on crafts and science experiments, and imaginary play. Dramatic play activities support the cultivation of social emotional skills that become the necessary tools to manage emotions and develop meaningful connections. With yoga instruction, Go Noodle breaks, and multi-sensory experiences, members will grow their fine motor skills and master their gross motor functions.

Providing the youngest and most vulnerable members with their own programming, their own space, and their own staff increases their autonomy and grows their confidence, preparing them to transition successfully to pre-adolescence.

Members ages seven through nine receive three hours of intentional, educational programming directed at building the skills necessary to achieve goals, to succeed academically, and to make smart decisions. At this pivotal age, girls are experiencing independence for the first time. They are prepared and ready to take on more responsibility. They are navigating shifting friendships and are conceptualizing their own personal values with the world around them. At Girls Inc. they are offered programs to help them traverse these unsure and challenging developmental milestones. Girls with Goals aids members in identifying their values and their ambitions, while teaching them the tools needed to stay focused and to create realistic and attainable plans.

With Friendly PEERsauasion, a National Girls Inc. curriculum, girls are introduced to complicated social matters, such as bullying, substance abuse, and peer pressure. Interactive, cooperative games and role-playing guides girls to respond thoughtfully, instead of reacting impulsively, in these situations. They leave the program with the skills to make smart choices for themselves and to be a peer-influencer for their friends. This type of instruction and development sets the stage for members to transition to early adolescence successfully.
Early adolescence is a time of vulnerability and difficulty for most. With bodies growing and changing, an awareness of the world and its systems developing, and the need for complete independence emerging, it is a period when the decisions made can dictate the course of a child’s future. Girls ages ten through twelve are susceptible to extreme low self-esteem, mood irregularity, and irrational emotions that can dictate their behavior. Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell recognized the multi-dimensional factors that impact girl’s development and responded by creating an improved schedule of programs that address each of these factors. With funding from the P&G Foundation, this semester will see a roll out of programs intended to educate and empower our girls to manage and respond to early adolescence with healthy and safe choices. Strong Families will aid members in coping with difficult family dynamics and the Healthy and Happy Program has been revitalized and improved to align with common core standards for health education. The Tween Mentoring Program, a small cohort of “tween” members who meet after hours, has been reinstituted, allowing members age 10-12, to guide and direct some of their own curriculum while creating natural pathways to meaningful, mentoring relationships with staff. These vital programs support each other and members by creating programs that are scaffolded and complimentary. The reconstruction of the early adolescence program will decrease risk taking behaviors and provide an avenue into responsible and productive adulthood.

Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell plays a vital role in each stage of development for all members of all ages. These crucial milestones require support, guidance, and instruction that can only be provided during out-of-school time. Renewing the structure and content of programming is a critical aspect of supporting development. Girls Inc. remains committed to producing the fundamental and necessary education and instruction required for its members to grow into the future as potent, perceptive, and intrepid leaders of the global community.
Teen Center Program

The Girls Inc. Carol S. Duncan Teen Center has been having an exciting year jammed-pack with exhilarating new programs that serve to further enrich the teen experience and help them to build their creativity, self-esteem, decision-making skills, conflict resolution, and so much more! Girls Inc. is always grateful for the meaningful community partners who donate their time and expertise to Girls Inc.

The Center for Hope and Healing, a rape crisis center that serves and supports survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones, came back to the Teen Center for the second year to deliver a course in *Radical Self-Love*! The program includes activities that provide an outlet for creative expression as the teens build their own self-love bibles that they can refer to anytime they’re feeling like they need a boost or a reminder of just how amazing they truly are. Activities in this program include making happy lists, drawing a tree that depicts their support systems and how those systems can help them reach their goals, a page dedicated to celebrating their bodies and its functions, identifying healthy and unhealthy boundaries as well as safe spaces, and so much more. The facilitators, Adriana Reyes and Mana Kheang, have built strong, meaningful mentoring relationships with the teens and always come with an arsenal of resources for teens who may need a little extra support. The Teen Program strives to instill a strong foundation of self-love with the teens, and this program could not have come at a better time. When teens learn to love themselves and build healthy habits that support their personal growth, they are more likely to make better, healthier choices for themselves and their futures!

For nearly seven years, Teen Coordinator, Maritza Grooms, has been the sole facilitator for the teen center program. But with the growth of the organization, the teen program has also grown exponentially, which has called for more hands on deck!

Girls Inc. was able to hire Teen Program Specialist, Benjamin Orzechowski, who was formerly an intern from Umass Lowell’s Sociology Department. Ben has been facilitating programs revolving around media literacy, including Girls Inc. National’s *Girls Make The Message*. This semester, Ben has brought his broadcasting skills to the girls with a new program called *Xpress Yourself*. In this program, the teens have been learning about what podcasts are, how to deliver a message effectively, how young people can use their voices to create positive change, and are in the process of recording their own podcasts. The teens are also learning skills that they can use to help them be academically successful in this program, such as how to summarize information succinctly, how to ask meaningful questions, and how to be active listeners. Ben and the teens are having a blast in this program and cannot wait to show everyone what they’ve been working on!
Outreach & Special Programs

The Outreach Program has made great strides in the New Year. The program has hired new Outreach Program Specialists who are creating wonderful mentoring relationships and making positive impacts on Girls Inc. members. They are also providing an opportunity for growth of the Outreach Program. With an increase in the number of staff members, Girls Inc. has been able to expand the numbers of both schools and girls served.

The girls at the Spark Academy enjoyed the programming so much last year, they asked their school to have our program come back again this year. We now serve both the 6th and 7th grades for two days a week. It has been reported from their school counselor that the girls ask every Monday and Wednesday if they have Girls Inc. programming. The school’s faculty have also stated how much of an impact the programs have had on their youth and can see growth from their students every time we run a program with them. Girls Inc. staff enjoy running the program with the youth as much as they enjoy participating in them.

Another partnership Girls Inc. has created this year is with two therapeutic day schools in Lowell, the Laura Lee Therapeutic Day school, who serves grades K-8, and the Leblanc Therapeutic Day School, who serves grade 9-12. The Laura Lee started with our programming at the beginning of October for what originally was 8 weeks but asked us to continue until the end of the school year because of how beneficial our programming is to the students. Girls Inc. Outreach programs runs three days a week, which allows for every student at the school to participate in the program. With the success at the Laura Lee, the principal decided to pass along our information to the social worker at the Leblanc School, which sparked the beginning of a new partnership. Here, two National Girls Inc. programs are run: She’s On the Money and Friendly PEERSuasion. Teachers of both schools have thanked our staff daily during program hours and state how lucky their students are to have Girls Inc. in their lives.
Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell
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TO:

SAVE THE DATES!

Summer Enrichment Program
6/17/2019 to 8/23/2019
Stay informed with summer program updates at:
http://girlsinclowell.org/programs/summer/

The Board of Directors of Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell cordially invites you to the
Annual Meeting of the Corporation
Wednesday, May 8, 2019
at 12:15 pm
220 Worthen Street, Lowell
Please R.S.V.P. by May 4, 2018
(978) 458 – 6529