

strong smart

Girls Inc.

to
do
it

Talking to Our GIRLS

Girls Inc. shares the why and how

often wondered how many girls
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app, I was sentenced to die
by a military tribunal
of the same name.

Teen-Talk Today

Talking Straight about Sex

Kaiser Permanente Invests in the Talk

Girls Inc. Earns Non-Profit
Community Impact Award

girls
inc.®

Girls Incorporated®
of Alameda County



SPRING 2011



dear friends,

You may be surprised to learn that Girls Inc. has been celebrating girls' voices nationally since 1864! We have long promoted the rights of girls to express themselves with originality and enthusiasm. In short, we encourage girls to talk so that we might better understand and respond to what matters. We are pleased to share that our girls' voices will receive an even broader audience at this year's San Francisco International Film Festival on April 7th.

Recently, girls participating in our ACT (Advocating Change together) project were invited to participate in the Women's Film Institute's Generation HERstory Media Arts Project (GHMAP). For the past 10 weeks GHMAP has provided free hands-on filmmaking training and mentoring to our ACT participants. Our girls have been given the tools to create short films that reflect their unique voices. These films will premiere at the film festival in April.

In this issue, we look at the importance of encouraging the voices, questions and concerns of youth through healthy conversations. You'll hear from one of our HEART (Helping Everyone Achieve Respect Together) participants who shares how she talks straight about sex as a peer educator in the community. Kaiser Permanente also shares why investing in healthy conversations will ensure that our youth live well and thrive long into the future. And don't miss our cover story, which reveals the top five issues that teens are talking about today.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you for partnering with us in our efforts to ensure that the strong, smart and bold voices of *all* girls are truly heard.

Warmly,

Linda Boessenecker | **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

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Girls Incorporated®
of Alameda County

Girls Incorporated of Alameda County® is a local affiliate of the national Girls Incorporated organization with the shared mission of inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. For over 50 years, Girls Inc. has responded to the unique needs of girls in the most underserved communities of San Francisco's East Bay through a continuum of academic enrichment programs, and counseling services. Programs challenge girls to explore their potential, develop life skills, ensure college and career success, and expand their sense of what is possible. Through its innovative approach, Girls Inc. has established itself as one of the Bay Area's leading providers of supplemental education, reaching nearly 6,500 girls, family members and clients annually. For more information, visit girlsinc-alameda.org.

donor profile:

Those who are fortunate to cross paths with Priscilla Stewart-Jones will soon learn that she was raised by a village in the neighborhood of Nashville where she grew up. "Grandparents, teachers, clergy, shop owners --- they were all invested in my success as a human being," explains Priscilla. "I consider Girls Inc. to be that village for girls in Alameda County today who are growing up in difficult situations."

Given her experiences growing up, it's not surprising that Priscilla chose human resources for her life's work. As Senior Vice President of Human Resources for McKesson Corporation, she is invested in the development and success of the 32,000 people that McKesson employs across the nation and the world.

Priscilla is also a mother---and one that knows the importance of talking earlier, more often and openly with kids about topics such as sexuality, health, and risky behaviors. "Because of technology, kids today are exposed to more complex and sophisticated subjects

much earlier than when I was growing up," she explained. To Priscilla this means that parents have an even greater responsibility to understand what kids are talking about today. "Only then," she said, "can we have conversations with our kids that put the proper perspective on things so that they can make the kinds of good decisions for themselves that need to be made."

Working at McKesson, one of America's oldest and largest health care services, Priscilla is also keenly aware of the importance of talking to kids about making healthy choices for a healthy lifestyle. "McKesson is committed to improving the quality of lives in our communities," said Priscilla, "and investing in nonprofit organizations like Girls Inc. that strengthen the health of our communities.

We at Girls Inc. have been enriched by McKesson's investment and partnership, and by our relationship with Priscilla. She has provided us with expert guidance as a member of our Board



Priscilla Stewart-Jones, Girls Inc. Board of Directors, friend and supporter

SUPPORTER SINCE 2009

WHY I GOT INVOLVED

"It takes a village to raise a truly strong, smart and bold girl. Girls Inc. is that village for girls in Alameda County today who are growing up in difficult situations."

of Directors since 2009, participating on both our Human Resources and Fund Development committees. Seeing first-hand the transformational impact of Girls Inc.'s efforts to improve access to health and sexuality education, address obesity, and provide mental health counseling is what matters in the end to Priscilla. "Girls Inc. is my kind of village," she smiled.

how to give:

- **ONLINE** | Make a gift through our secure online server at www.girlsinc-alameda.org
 - **COMPANY MATCH** | Give a gift through your workplace giving campaign or corporate matching program.
 - **MEMORIAL TRIBUTE** | Make a gift in honor of a special occasion or in remembrance.
 - **LEGACY GIVING** | Contribute to The Loomes Legacy Circle endowment fund to perpetuate your gift.
 - **STOCK** | Donate stocks or bonds conveniently.
 - **AUTOMATIC MONTHLY GIVING** | Contribute monthly via credit card or automatic withdrawal.
 - **VOLUNTEER** | Give your time as another way to show support.
- For questions about contributing to Girls Inc. of Alameda County, please contact us at (510) 357-5515 ext. 246.



Girls Inc. Peer Advocates discuss best practices in relaying unbiased health and sexuality information and resources so teens can take responsibility for their sexual health.

TEEN-TALK TODAY

Listen up!

Teens love to talk: they love to talk online, via text, on the phone, at school, after-school, in the car--but what are they talking about exactly?...and why does sudden lock-jaw occur when adults are within a five-foot radius?

So what are the most popular issues for teens today? What do they really worry about? And why aren't these issues brought up more with parents, counselors, and teachers who can actually give advice and help? According to Teen Line, a confidential telephone helpline in California, the top five issues that teens call in for help are relationships, abuse, sex, drugs and alcohol, and suicide.

We at Girls Inc. see the impact of these issues on girls in Alameda County everyday. In particular, the alarming prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and rising teen birth rates in the county led us to launch our Helping Everyone Achieve Respect Together (HEART) after-school program in 2000. The program engages young women annually in their

community as peer educators and mentors on health and sexuality issues. HEART empowers girls to become informed resources for their peers in transmitting accurate information to underserved youth, regardless of gender.

“Strong evidence suggests that healthy dialogue helps youth to withstand the pressures to have sex too soon AND to have responsible and mutually protective relationships when they choose to become sexually active.”

So how do we as parents and caregivers get in on the conversation? Surprisingly, according to research conducted by the Guttmacher Institute, nearly one-quarter of teens do not get information about birth control either from a parent or in schools. Despite the attempts of many school health classes, teens have lots of questions about pregnancy, condoms, abstinence and oral sex. The same research found that teens rank their parents

as important sources of sexual health information.

All kinds of teens today are dealing with these issues, not just girls, not just poor kids, not just rich kids, not just kids in public school...they are all

dealing with these important, and sometimes very serious issues.

It's up to parents to start the conversation. Sudden lock-jaw may occur. Eyes may roll. Sighs may be uttered. We challenge you to be strong, smart and bold as you start this important dialogue with your teen.

TALKING STRAIGHT ABOUT SEX.

All children need information about sex and growing up. Girls Inc. Peer Educator, Chelsea, recalls being sat down for “the talk” by her mom, “but not in the let’s talk about the birds and the bees manner.” Awkwardly, her mom used an approach that was most familiar --- speaking from her own experiences. Not only was the conversation uncomfortable but, because her mother wasn’t specific or positive, it wasn’t very informative either.

In a second attempt to get informed, Chelsea nervously came home with a permission slip from school to attend sex education workshops. Chelsea feared judgment from her grandmother. She vowed never to succumb to the sexual pressures that were talked about in the



Stories from friends and media messages did not properly prepare HEART educator, Chelsea, to navigate challenging situations as a teen.

workshops. But her limited knowledge simply wasn’t enough to help her make positive choices as she began to face increasing sexual pressures in her life.

Chelsea struggled to find an adviser, or anyone to talk to about sexual health issues. Stumbling upon Girls Inc.’s HEART (Helping Everyone Achieve Respect Together) program was the

best accident that ever happened to her. Since being a peer educator, “I have been empowered to seek out resources and go out into the world to teach others what I have learned,” Chelsea exclaimed. “HEART is facilitated in a manner that makes youth feel safe and confident to share accurate information with peers everywhere.”

WHY IS TALKING IMPORTANT?

LET’S TALK... 87% of teens say it would be easier to postpone sexual activity if they could talk more openly about sex with parents.

LET’S NOT... 78% named embarrassment as a big reason for not starting a dialogue.

BUT MAYBE... 62% of youth wish they could talk more openly with parents about sex.

BUT HOW... 77% of teens say they don’t know how to bring up the subject.



Nearly one-quarter of teens do not get information about birth control either from a parent or in schools.

funder spotlight



HEALTHY GIRLS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Parents from all walks of life share something in common. Most don't talk to their children about topics like sex, often because they don't have the words to begin the conversation.

That's why Kaiser Permanente has invested in Girls Incorporated of Alameda County programs focused on expanding and improving access to health and sexuality information for underserved youth. "Parents, especially from ethnic groups, have a difficult time talking to their kids about sex," said Sylvia Jimenez, Kaiser Permanente, Southern Alameda County. With limited access to sexual health education in school settings, after-school programs like Girls Inc.'s HEART (Helping Everyone Achieve Respect Together) are even more important today, according to Jimenez.

In addition to sexual health education, Girls Inc. provides educational programs and mental health counseling that give girls from

"Girls Inc. has a proven track record for high-impact program delivery focused on obesity, teen pregnancy and violence prevention in communities served by Kaiser Permanente. We're pleased to support this important work of Girls Incorporated of Alameda County."

---Sylvia Jimenez, Kaiser Permanente

underserved communities the skills to achieve academic success, a healthy lifestyle and self-confidence. This comprehensive approach is one of the reasons Kaiser believes investing in Girls Inc. is so essential. "We have to teach our young girls and build their self-esteem so that they can make good choices now and in the future," emphasized Jimenez.

dear world,

INSIGHT FOR YOUTH, PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Children are curious about sex, and they're apt to ask blunt questions. Answer them honestly. They'll let you know when they've heard enough. It's never too early to start talking to your children about sexual matters. Openness, even with young children, will show that sex is an acceptable topic of conversation, and a natural part of life. Teach your child that you are available to discuss sexual issues, and establish a comfort level for both of you with the topic.

Don't feel like you have to include everything in one big discussion. Instead, talk about questions and behaviors as they occur. Because we are born as sexual beings, any age is an appropriate one to talk about sex with your child. What needs to be taken into consideration is your child's maturity level, what they already know and what they really want to know. But how do you start talking? Our young people need to become educated. How do we do this? Do we simply stay quiet and pray for the best? Do we talk about sex with our children? Read on for tips...

---Monica Grajales
Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs Manager



in her own words

A RECENT ALUMNA SHARES HOW GIRLS INC. INSPIRED HER TO TALK SEX

Growing up, Rebecca Alvarez, was a participant in Girls Inc. programs. Her Girls Inc. experiences inspired her to pursue a BA in Women's Health and Sexuality at UC Berkeley (Class of 2007). She then went on to graduate from San Francisco State University with masters in both human sexuality and psychology research.

Q: How did Girls Inc. inspire you to enter into the sexual health field?

A: As a former participant, Girls Inc. gave me a safe space to discuss taboo subjects and ask questions about sex that otherwise would not be "appropriate" in a classroom setting. When I came back to teach health and sexuality courses during college, I became passionate about teaching the material. I loved teaching various lesson plans that gave the girls age-appropriate, realistic, and comprehensive information about sexuality, sexual behavior, choices and intimate relationships.

Q: Why is it important for youth to have someone to talk to about sex?

A: Many times, teens are worried that talking about sex will make the other person feel uncomfortable or that she will be judged. Teens need to have a conversation with someone who is open to any sexual discussion and who can provide accurate comprehensive information without judgment. In a supportive environment, teens get real and most importantly, they listen and are able to make good decisions for themselves.

Q: What positive impacts occur when parents have conversations about sex with their children?

A: When parents are able to have continuous and open conversations with their children about sex--particularly beginning at a young age---sex becomes less awkward to discuss. Parents need to be the ones who initiate the conversations and let the child know it is OK to discuss sex or any topic with them. Setting the stage early for these types of conversations will better give children and teens the courage they need to ask the difficult questions along the way. Not only do teens appreciate an "open-minded" mom, dad, or guardian, but they will benefit from accurate, age-appropriate discussions. Their friends may too.

“The reality is that young adults are sexual beings, and therefore they need good information about sex and relationships in order to make good decisions for their bodies and well-being.”



Girls Inc. alumna, Rebecca Alvarez, knows from experience how important having healthy conversations with youth is.

TALKING TIPS

- Be honest, open and matter-of-fact
- Start conversations with "teachable moments"
- Don't let fear get in the way of talking with your children

COMMUNITY PARENT ED AT GIRLS INC.

This workshop's focus will encourage adults to talk to youth about sex and give applicable tools on how to communicate accurate information. If interested in attending, please RSVP to Monica Grajales by April 20th at mgrajales@girlsinc-alameda.org. Workshops held in the San Leandro Office 6pm-8pm:

April 27th (English)

April 28th (Spanish)

HAVING HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS

Use teachable moments at dinner time, while watching TV, in the car, while reading billboards or listening to the radio. Every moment is a teachable moment!

If your child asks a direct and specific question and you are not ready to answer, watch your body language. It speaks louder than words!! You can also reply with another question to buy yourself time to think about the answer. You can ask questions like:

- What is your understanding?
- What do you think it means?



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GIRLS INC. EARNS NCCLF NONPROFIT AWARD

Girls Incorporated of Alameda County is honored to announce that we will be presented with the 2011 NCCLF Non-Profit Community Impact Award for our critical and transformational work in local communities. Linda Boessenecker, Girls Inc. CEO, will accept the award at NCCLF’s 8th Annual Spring Event, May 19th, 2011 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the Ed Roberts Campus.

**GIRLS INC.’S DE DOMENICO INDUCTED INTO
ALAMEDA COUNTY WOMEN’S HALL OF FAME**

We are honored to announce that Girls Inc. board member, Lois De Domenico, was the first philanthropist to be inducted into the 2011 Alameda County Women’s Hall of Fame. Lois was celebrated at an awards luncheon in March for providing her time, expertise and financial support to Alameda County community organizations for more than 50 years. Since joining our board in 2002, Lois has helped Girls Inc. achieve a 33 percent rise in donations, expand our fundraising base and recruit a diverse mix of community leaders to our board. Most importantly, Lois has positively influenced scores of underserved girls in Alameda County, teaching them yoga and helping to develop their self-confidence. Girls Inc. is proud to call Lois a friend.

