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CONTACT: Karina Ioffee
(510) 357-5515 ext. 262

**THE SUPERGIRL DILEMMA: GIRLS FEEL THE PRESSURE TO BE
PERFECT, ACCOMPLISHED, THIN, AND ACCOMMODATING**

SAN LEANDRO (October 16, 2006) — Fifteen-year-old Naomi is stressed out. “The two biggest issues facing me are the pressure to have sex and to do well in school,” says the Oakland teen. “It feels like everyone is having sex and if you aren’t, you are afraid to say anything so people won’t think you’re stupid.”

Naomi’s feelings are far from unique, according to *The Supergirl Dilemma: Girls Grapple with the Mounting Pressure of Expectations*, a new research report issued this week by Girls Inc., a national organization that works to improve girls’ self-esteem and confidence through a broad range of programs. The report reveals that girls today experience more pressure to please everyone, be very thin, and dress “right.” And while stereotypes about girls’ leadership capabilities and math and science abilities have diminished, persistent gender stereotypes and escalating stress levels limit girls’ potential and undermine their quality of life.

The national report, conducted by Harris Interactive, mirrors what Girls Incorporated of Alameda County has witnessed firsthand over the years. In 2003, we launched an innovative research project that looked into girls’ attitudes towards sexuality, body image and relationships with both their peers and adults. The findings, which are expected to be published this month, were astounding, such as:

- Over a third (39%) of girls under said they had felt pressure from their peers to have sex and nearly half (48 %) said they were younger than 14 years old when they first had sex
- Asian and Pacific Islander girls reported feeling stressed out and suicidal more than any other ethnic group
- Nearly a quarter (22%) of the girls reported not feeling safe at school

To obtain a copy of *The Supergirl Dilemma* or the findings of the Girls’ Research Project, contact Karina Ioffee at (510) 357-5515 ext. 262 or kioffee@girlsinc-alameda.org

Girls Inc. of Alameda County is an affiliate of the national Girls Inc. and serves 7,000 girls and their families through year-round programs focusing on academic enrichment, leadership, self-esteem and mental health and counseling services. Our programs challenge girls to explore their full potential, attend college, build fulfilling careers and expand their sense of what is possible.

