

Girls Inc. Leadership and Community ActionSM

Why This Program?

Throughout history, women and girls have blazed pathways to progress and change. Girls and women have *always been* leaders, but their leadership has often gone unrecognized. To address this problem and to inspire girls to become leaders, Girls Incorporated has developed this program to bring girls and adult women together to discover the power of their capacity for leadership through community action.

About the Program

Girls Inc. Leadership and Community Action enables girls to join in partnership with women leaders in their community to develop and practice leadership and advocacy skills and conduct community action projects. One of the principal strengths of Leadership and Community Action is the opportunity it provides girls to make decisions, take responsibility, and initiate projects in collaboration with experienced women.

The two developmentally appropriate components of this program include:

- **Discovery: A Leadership Program for Girls and WomenSM:**

Girls ages 9 to 11 and women come together to celebrate their heritage as leaders. They discover their own leadership skills through hands-on activities, role plays, community exploration, and a weekend retreat. In addition, specially selected posters, books, games, CD-ROMs, and other resources help create an environment of recognition and celebration of female leaders from many cultures, past and present. Together, Discovery Leadership partners explore and build upon this legacy to form their own ideas about what leadership means to them.

- **In Our Own HandsSM** (scheduled to be released in 2006): Girls ages 12 to 14 celebrate their heritage, investigate rights and responsibilities, practice leadership skills, and tackle issues of concern. Facilitators are encouraged to incorporate adult women from the community into as many of the sessions as possible. During the second phase of the program, girls develop and conduct a community action project with the support of women partners.

A key feature of Leadership and Community Action is that it increases girls' and women's awareness of themselves as community resources, trustees of the common good, and leaders in their own right. From getting a stop sign placed at a dangerous corner to enhancing community awareness of the dangers of drugs and violence—Leadership and Community Action empowers girls, enriches their communities, and enables them to explore their own ability and responsibility to produce positive, long-term social change.



"I used to think that a leader had to be a famous person. I learned that I, Carline, and all of us are leaders. We all have something positive to offer. We are natural leaders for our parents, our siblings, our friends, and even strangers. We can all learn from others, and we can contribute."

—Carline, age 11

Results

Since the pilot phase of this program, hundreds of girls have put leadership into practice through the design and implementation of community action projects created in collaboration with women partners. In Minneapolis, Discovery Leadership partners planned a personal meeting with the mayor to discuss community safety. In Denver, the program helped reinforce girls' essential role in the city's youth development campaign; consequently, Girls Inc. of Metro Denver was invited to work closely with local schools and the Denver Housing and Urban Development agency to provide the program, on an outreach basis, to more girls. These action projects provide long-lasting benefits to communities and to the girls and women who work together to discover their power to make positive change.

Funders

The following grant makers are among the many generous contributors who have supported Girls Inc. Leadership and Community Action and related initiatives:

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Girls Incorporated

Girls Incorporated® is a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls through research-based programs and public education efforts that empower girls to understand, value, and assert their rights. In 2004, Girls Inc. reached nearly 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational publications.

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