



Girls Incorporated®  
of Westchester County



**Healthy, Educated, Independent**

**A Funding Proposal submitted to the xxxxx Foundation**

**June 10, 2013**

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## **GIRLS INC. WESTCHESTER PROPOSAL SUMMARY:**

**Girls Incorporated of Westchester County respectfully requests a grant of \$5,000 from the xxxxxx Foundation to fund *Healthy, Educated, Independent*, a multi-faceted, girls-only education program that encourages the emotional, social, and academic development of at-risk Westchester County teens.** Every day, America's girls -- particularly those in the lowest-income communities -- face a barrage of challenges that place their safety, their educations, and their futures at-risk. With support from the xxxxx Foundation, Girls Inc. will provide gender-targeted weekly after-school programming to 250 at-risk 9-18 Westchester year-old girls, giving them the information, mentors, and support they need to surmount these obstacles, finish school, and develop into healthy, educated, and independent adults.

### **Mission and History**

Girls Inc. Westchester is a local affiliate of Girls Inc. – an almost 150 year old national non-profit that has dedicated itself to a simple mission: inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Nationally, Girls Inc. reaches 125,000 girls annually with programs specifically designed to address girls' strengths and needs, while Girls Inc.'s research arm, The Girls Incorporated National Resource Center, serves as the country's largest and most comprehensive study center on girls' issues.

In 2007, Girls Inc. brought its nationally-proven program model to Westchester, giving girls here the support and opportunities they need to continue their educations and succeed in school and beyond. Our target population is middle and high school girls in the county's most disadvantaged communities. We have recently offered after-school programs in White Plains, New Rochelle, Yonkers, and Ossining, some of Westchester's most challenging communities, and 90% of the girls we serve are girls of color.

Girls Inc. programs help girls address a wide range of vital issues – issues like body image, pregnancy prevention, economic literacy, violence prevention, leadership, and more. Our programs are offered in 10-12-week cycles, as 2-4 session workshops, or as day-long conferences. All programs have been tested nationally to confirm their impact, all focus on helping girls understand their assets and opportunities, and all are designed to enable and inspire girls to achieve their potential. In the past 5 years, Girls Inc. Westchester has helped more than 1,800 local girls see themselves and their futures in a new light.

### **The Needs of Westchester's Girls**

In Westchester County, NY, -- as in many areas -- the prospects for girls are vastly different than they are for boys. Persisting stereotypes, economic inequalities, low self-esteem, and more all play a part in an equation that often leaves girls behind, trapped in a cycle of poverty:

- Approximately 33,000 9-18 year-old girls are living in poverty *in the county's eight poorest communities alone.*

- A staggering 51.9% of poor families in Westchester are headed by women with children.
- Approximately 25% of girls are sexually victimized by age 18.
- Sex appeal is promoted as girls' key driver of success.
- Teen pregnancy is a growing problem and young girls continue to turn to abortion as a way out. In 2006, 1,500 teen pregnancies were reported in Westchester, 58% of which were terminated. 30% of female high school drop-outs cite pregnancy or parenthood as a key reason.
- Less than 2% of teen mothers earn a college degree, even by age 30. This relegates them to earn, on average, 2.5x less than if they had continued their educations.

For the girls in our area who are struggling for even the *chance* to succeed, these are more than just numbers. Our partners in Yonkers, White Plains, New Rochelle, Mamaroneck, and Ossining tell us that their girls are not achieving all they are capable of. Too few are graduating from high school and moving on to college, many lack confidence, and often they do not feel capable of changing their own circumstances. In one Girls Inc. group this year, every single 6<sup>th</sup> grader rated "sex appeal" as a highly-important personal value. Last year, one of our groups included a 7<sup>th</sup> grader with a one-year old baby.

**There is an urgent need for education programs that will help Westchester girls realize their potential, stay focused on their goals, and build healthy, economically stable lives.**

#### **Our Solution -- *Healthy, Educated, Independent***

*Healthy, Educated, Independent* programs are research-based, after-school education programs that focus specifically on girls' strengths and needs with the goal of helping girls develop emotionally, socially, and academically, and build toward secure and fulfilling adult lives. Ten to twelve (10-12) middle or high school girls at a time meet approximately 2 hours per week, for 10-12 weeks, with a trained, adult facilitator who helps them build their confidence, explore their goals and aspirations, and discuss the difficult, real-life challenges that often prevent girls from realizing their potential. In this positive, all-girls environment, girls build supportive relationships with each other and with caring adult role models and they learn skills and strategies that will help them stay on track for success.

#### **HEI programs educate girls about:**

- Healthy Sexuality: developing a healthy body image; avoiding sexually transmitted infections; making informed decisions about sexual health and relationships.
- Economic Literacy: money, the economy, future planning, and the basics of how to manage, invest, and save.
- Media Literacy: analyzing media and the effects the messages have on self-image and aspirations.
- Violence Prevention and Safety: skills and strategies to lead safer lives in homes, in relationships, in the community, and online.
- Life Planning, Leadership, and Community Action: goals and future planning; leadership skills; career opportunities; and self-advocacy.

- STEM: cultivating their interest in and eligibility for education and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

**HEI programs are nationally-proven to help girls grow to be:**

<b>Strong/Healthy</b>	<b>Smart/Educated</b>	<b>Bold/Independent</b>
Making healthy choices	Able to analyze what they see and hear in the media	Enjoying sound body image and self-esteem
Utilizing skills and strategies to lead safer lives in their relationships, their communities and online	Exposed to a variety of careers and people	Knowledgeable about money and the basics of financial independence
Able to resist pressure to use harmful substances	Motivated to set and achieve goals	Engaging in goal setting and career and college planning
Able to deflect and manage peer, media, and other pressures	Graduating from high school and pursuing post-secondary education	Able to advocate for themselves and others
Managing reproductive health		Resilient
Able to resist pressure to use harmful substances		

Girls leave Girls Inc. Westchester’s HEI educational programs with a greater sense of self-esteem, a strong support network, a renewed commitment to continuing their educations, and new hope for their futures.

**The Healthy, Educated, Independent Expansion Plan**

**A grant from the xxxxx Foundation will enable us to increase our HEI programming by 40% in 2013-14, reaching 250 girls with small-group, weekly programs that offer the information, support, experiences, and mentors they need to stay in school and lead healthy, economically secure lives.** In 2012-13 we delivered 9 high-impact, weekly programs to New Rochelle and Ossining girls in 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. In 2013-14, with help from the xxxxxxx Foundation, we will expand to 14 programs in New Rochelle and Ossining, and begin to move into additional under-resourced neighborhoods.

- In New Rochelle: We will double our high-school programs from 2 to 4; introduce programs in an additional middle school; and offer programs for 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Columbus Elementary where 82% of students are Latino and 78% qualify for free/reduced lunch.
- In Ossining: We will continue current programming at the Anne M. Dorner Middle School and the Roosevelt School, and also expand into Ossining High School so that girls there can have access to Girls Inc.’s support and healthy decision-making techniques as they make critical decisions about college, careers, and relationships. This will result in a 25% increase in girls served in Ossining, and our first time serving Ossining girls all the way from 5<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

- In Our Expansion Communities: Based on a local Needs Assessment we conducted, we have identified Mt. Kisco, Sleepy Hollow, Port Chester, Peekskill, and Mount Vernon as our next expansion targets. In 2013-14, we will conduct research and outreach into these communities and pursue relationships with the key stakeholders who will be essential for successful, sustainable programs. We expect to introduce programs in two of these communities by June, 2014.

A grant from the xxxxxxxx foundation would fund the supplies, program materials, facilitator training, transportation, and outreach that are required to make these programs a reality.

## Conclusion

We appreciate the xxxxxxxx Foundation's consideration of our funding request and your interest in supporting the education of Westchester County girls. A \$5,000 investment from the xxxxxx Foundation to support *Healthy, Educated, Independent* will make a real difference for local girls. One of our teens summed up the impact HEI can have like this:

*"As I began coming to (group) on a constant basis I noticed that the way I was living and the lifestyle I have become accustomed to, was not the life I wanted to live. Having the support of (Girls Inc.), I know that I can begin to make the changes in my life I need to make to have a positive future... I began to realize that I am strong and capable of overcoming anything. ...On the same streets that have caused me so much pain I began to gain the strength I need to turn over a new leaf and start fresh. (Girls Inc.) has been a place of hope and a positive symbol..."*

That's the level of transformation Girls Inc. makes possible, and we look forward to partnering with the xxxxx Foundation to make that transformation a reality for more Westchester girls.