

## You Can Start Your Own Girls' Community

Are you concerned about the environment? Do you love to read? Are you a serious sports fanatic?

Whatever your interests are, there's a good chance you can find many other girls who share them. A girls' community is a place where girls get together to be themselves, inspire each other and have fun. You might already belong to an organized group of girls or you might have an idea for a group you'd like to start.

Check out these tips and turn your passion into action!

### Food for thought

- ◆ **It's ok to be girls only.** Sometimes it's a relief to take a break from boys. A girls' community is a great place to say what you really feel and try new things that you might be less likely to try with guys around.
- ◆ **Girls set the agenda.** It's your show—your interests and concerns are at the heart of your community. Often girls' communities do invite adults to play supporting roles. Take the time to choose partners who will lend a helping hand without taking over.
- ◆ **Communities show r-e-s-p-e-c-t.** Girls' communities show all girls respect. Make sure *everyone* feels welcome and safe. Invite girls who share your interests, even if you don't usually hang around with them.
- ◆ **Share the leadership.** A girls' community offers everyone a chance to practice leadership and hone the skills it takes to lead with confidence. Working together has its own rewards.
- ◆ **Your community, your world.** Being part of a community can reinforce your inner strength and independence. Even when you're not with the group, you can use those strong, smart and bold skills in every part of your life.
- ◆ **Do your homework.** Learn about the issues that are important to you. Go to the library, surf the net, read newspapers and magazines. Sharing in research is one way to start your community.
- ◆ **Deal with details.** Find a place where your group can meet and organize a time that works for everyone.
- ◆ **Spread the word.** Figure out how you will let others know about the group. Web sites, flyers and school announcements are some likely attention grabbers.
- ◆ **Think big!** Even the smallest group is part of a larger community, so start making connections. For example — if you're forming a girls' animal rights group, why not reach out to some other animal rights organizations? Think about ways you can help them and they can help you.

### For more information:

*Girls and Young Women Leading the Way* by Frances A. Karnes and Suzanne M. Bean. (Free Spirit Publishing, 1993)

*The Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas For Young People Who Want to Make a Difference* by Barbara Lewis. (Free Spirit Publishing, 1995)

*It's Our World, Too!: Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference* by Philip Hoose. (Little Brown & Co., 1993)

Idealist.org for kids and teens <http://www.idealists.org/kt>

Girls Incorporated [www.girlsinc.org](http://www.girlsinc.org)

### Getting down to business

- ◆ **Define your goals.** Your plan doesn't have to be set in stone, but have some ideas about what projects your group can work on together.
- ◆ **Get some guidance.** Consider talking to older girls, mothers, aunts or teachers — anyone you look up to — about ways to get your community off the ground.

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