

At 1,500 program sites across the nation and in Canada, Girls Incorporated affiliates serve thousands of young women, empowering them to be strong, smart and bold. Girls Inc. programs strive to spark girls' learning and development and support families to help girls achieve their dreams. With roots dating to 1864 and national status since 1965, Girls Inc. has continuously sought to respond to girls' changing needs. "Strong families create the foundation for girls to build successful and fulfilling futures," says Joyce M. Roché, president and CEO of Girls Inc. "By supporting families, we are supporting girls as they reach their fullest potential."



GIRLS INCORPORATED OF THE ISLAND CITY

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Award-winning program: Supporting Families Supporting Girls

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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

INCORPORATING PARENTS

In the past two years, Girls Incorporated of the Island City in Alameda, Calif., has undergone a philosophical makeover. Once solely focused on its girls, Girls Inc. now purposefully seeks to involve parents in every aspect of programming for more than 600 elementary- through high school-aged students in summer, after-school and child care programs. “We are creating a more inclusive environment that supports the whole family to support the girl,” says Executive Director Karen Kenney.

By reaching out to parents in focus groups and at events, Girls Inc. solicits parent input to become more responsive to family needs. And based on parent feedback, Girls Inc. is implementing changes, such as a new program for middle school girls on bullying and peer pressure. Girls Inc. also has adjusted language in materials to reflect more family involvement. As a result, staff members have become more attuned to the families of their girls and more collaborative with parents in supporting the development of their daughters.

COMMUNITY NETWORKING

To help meet girls’ needs in the home, Girls Inc. has increased visibility in the community and established partnerships with agencies that provide resources for families. Kenney sits on the advisory board for the Alameda Food Bank and regularly meets with the city social services committee, providing valuable information to parents about food assistance, free health and counseling centers, low-cost tax preparation and other services. “We have become much more intentional in engaging parents and serving them in addition to serving our girls directly,” Kenney says. “If families’ basic needs are not met, kids are not going to be able to learn.”

In Girls Inc.’s fund-raising and promotional group, the Women of the 21st Century Club, community members and parents have organized educational panels for families in Girls Inc. as well as residents of the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Bringing together community leaders, school officials and youth workers, Girls Inc. has held discussions on various topics, including domestic violence and mental health, that have been televised on local media outlets, including a Spanish-language network.

“We are expanding our focus to strengthening families and communities so that our girls receive continuous and consistent support in every realm of their lives,” Kenney says. “By partnering with parents and community groups, we improve our ability to impact girls’ lives.”

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Girls Incorporated, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize Girls Incorporated affiliates with outstanding programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.



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LY IMPACTS THE GIRLS.

—Karen Kenney, executive director of Girls Incorporated of the Island City