

“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.

- Carline



Introduction

Girls Inc. empowers girls to succeed by providing trusting mentoring relationships, a girls-only environment, and research-based, hands-on programming. Three critical goals drive our programming: to help girls achieve healthy lives, succeed academically, and acquire the life skills needed to prepare them for adulthood. We work to ensure that girls have the skills, knowledge, and support to appreciate and take on a variety of leadership roles, and be independent thinkers.

Why is a leadership program for girls important?

In a survey about views of stereotypes about girls, half of adults and one-third of girls said it was true that people believe girls are not good leaders. Throughout history, girls and women have been formal and informal leaders of significant social movements and blazed pathways to progress and change; their leadership, however, has often gone unrecognized. Some stereotypes about girls and women present additional obstacles to thinking of girls and women as leaders: that girls care a lot about shopping, that they are only interested in love and romance, or that getting married and having children should be their most important, if not sole, life goal. Consequently, it can be challenging to ensure that girls have opportunities to lead and to be agents of change.

To address the lack of recognition and opportunities for girls and women as leaders and their contributions to social change, it is essential that girls have experiences that help them discover the power of their capacity for formal and informal leadership. The experiences also need to develop girls' awareness of and responsible engagement in their

community. It is critical that girls take this journey of discovery with women in their communities and participate in meaningful opportunities to effect lasting change through community action (small scale as well as large scale), providing convincing evidence to themselves and to others of their individual and collective power.

About the Program: Girls Inc. Leadership and Community Action

Through Girls Inc. Leadership and Community Action, girls build leadership skills and create lasting social change through community action projects. With support from women in their communities, girls celebrate the heritage of girls and women as leaders and social change agents and realize their own power as community resources and trustees of the common good.

- **Discovery** (for girls ages 9 to 11) engages girls in partnership with both formal and informal women leaders in their communities to celebrate their heritage as leaders, develop and practice leadership and advocacy skills, and construct community action projects. Girls get to make decisions and take responsibility for and initiate projects in collaboration with experienced women. Together, the girls and women discover their own leadership skills through hands-on activities, role playing, community exploration, and a weekend retreat, culminating in the identification of issues of ongoing concern to the community and formulation of responses that entail persuasive communication and organizing for action.



- **In Our Own Hands** (for girls ages 12 to 14) engages girls in celebrating their heritage, investigating rights and responsibilities, practicing leadership skills, and tackling issues of concern. Girls deepen their understanding of girls and women as social change agents and of leadership as a collective process grounded in belonging to, and having responsibility for, one's community. The first phase of the program focuses on strengthening girls' skills and their knowledge of and appreciation for female leadership in the context of community. During the second phase, facilitators draw upon several activity toolboxes and women from the community as resources to continue building girls' leadership skills. Girls go through a problem assessment process that helps them learn about a community issue, and then develop and conduct a community action project with the support of women partners.

Ancillary Components:

- **Girls Inc. She Votes** is a nonpartisan initiative that teaches girls of all ages about civic engagement and the democratic process. Girls learn how legislators make decisions at all levels of government and how those decisions impact the girls' lives. Trained staff expose girls to the excitement of government and running for office through relevant activities, speakers, and field trips. Through these experiences, girls gain the skills and confidence to be future voters, candidates, and legislators. Although designed for delivery in the United States, this workshop can be adapted for delivery in Canada.



About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Our comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. These positive outcomes are achieved through three core elements: *people* - trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships; *environment* - girls-only, physically and emotionally safe, where there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations, and mutual respect; and *programming* - research-based, hands-on and minds-on, age-appropriate, meeting the needs of today's girls. Informed by girls and their families, we also advocate for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls. Join us at girlsinc.org.

