

“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, Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, CA

Why This Program?

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. Of the girls and women who said the stereotype was true, nearly 90% of girls and 95% of women were dissatisfied with the stereotype.

Despite the prevalence of such stereotypes about girls and leadership, girls and women have always been leaders, but their leadership has often gone unrecognized. Throughout history, women and girls have emerged as formal and informal leaders of significant social movements and blazed pathways to progress and change. Other stereotypes about girls and women persist, serving as additional obstacles to thinking of girls and women as leaders: that girls care a lot about shopping, are only interested in love and romance, or that the most important thing for girls is that they get married and have children. Consequently, it can be challenging to ensure that girls have opportunities to lead and 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. Further, 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 ActionSM

Through Girls Inc. Leadership and Community ActionSM, girls build leadership skills and create lasting social change through community action projects. With support from women in their community, 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.

- **DiscoverySM** (for girls ages 9 to 11) engages girls in partnership with both formal and informal women leaders in their community 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 plays, 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 HandsSM** (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.

About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. delivers life-changing programs that inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Research-based curricula, delivered by trained professionals, equip girls to achieve academically; lead healthy and physically active lives; manage money; navigate media messages; and discover an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math. The network of local Girls Inc. nonprofit organizations serves 150,000 girls annually at over 1,400 sites in 350 cities across the United States and Canada. Learn more about our programs and advocacy at: www.girlsinc.org.

