

End of the year report –Santa Cruz County FY 2019-20

This has been a noteworthy year for Girls Inc. of the Central Coast. Despite school closures in March, we were still able to serve 141 Santa Cruz County girls and 24 parents at 5 schools in Watsonville and Aptos! Undaunted by our inability to continue bringing our after-school programs to the schools, we perfected our skills in Zoom and implemented virtual workshops for both our high school and middle school programs so that the girls could complete the remaining activities. And, as always, the girls successfully surpassed our anticipated outcomes in every program.

We are proud to report the outcomes of our work this year:

1. We served 36 young women in our **ECHO Leadership and Mentoring** program at Pajaro Valley High School. The girls participated in 16 interactive workshops (July-April) that included: goal setting, celebrating our cultures and families, honoring the women who inspire us, basic health care, healthy relationships, requirements for college, nutrition, public speaking, civic engagement, financial literacy, career readiness and resume writing. Three of these workshops were implemented virtually and included 4 career days and 3 physical activities. They also had the opportunity to explore new places during field trips to three colleges and the State Capitol. They met with legislators and advocated for issues of concern for themselves and their communities. As a result of their participation, 99%-100% can see themselves in college and reported increased self-confidence voicing concerns to legislators.



2. We hired and trained 5 **Youth Leaders** – ECHO graduates – who planned, facilitated and evaluated our programs in Watsonville and Aptos. The Youth Leaders were trained in how to read a curriculum, public speaking, facilitation skills, classroom management, conflict resolution, team building, job readiness, and mandatory reporting to Child Protective Services. They were also required to learn the informational content of each program: pregnancy and substance abuse prevention, assertive communication, bullying prevention, stress management, health and wellness, developing healthy relationships, sports, and hands-on STEM activities. During their tenure, 100% of the Youth Leaders demonstrated recruitment, facilitation, public speaking, training and evaluation skills.



3. We implemented our **Will Power/Won't Power** program at Cesar Chavez Middle School and Aptos Jr. High School, serving 37 8th graders. The girls participated in 10 interactive workshops focused on empowering them to communicate assertively. The workshops included information and activities on how to manage different types of relationships, reproductive health and values, the effects of media messages, bullying, resisting negative peer pressure, dreams, goals and steps to achieve them, voting and the importance of that right, avoiding risky situations, factual information on women's health and wellness, nutrition, hygiene and reproductive health. As a result, 100% feel they have the ability to make good choices for themselves, know how to communicate effectively, and understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.



4. **Friendly PEERSuasion Phase 1**, provided 39 6th and 7th graders, at Rolling Hills Middle and Aptos Jr. High Schools, the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge in recognizing and resisting pressures from peers, advertisers, adults or others to use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. They learned communication skills, stress management, team building, combatting bullying, and healthy vs. unhealthy behaviors. We completed 7 of the 12 Phase 1 activities in person, and 5 virtual workshops after school closures. The virtual workshops included managing stress, depression and anxiety during the pandemic, building self-esteem and confidence, and physical activities as a way of alleviating stress while having fun. As a result, 90% recognized stress, its physical symptoms, and healthy stress management tools and can identify the effects of drugs and alcohol on the body. We were not able to set up virtual programming for the elementary school girls and could not offer Phase 2 of Friendly PEERSuasion at Freedom and Mar Vista Elementary Schools for 4th and 5th graders.

5. We served 48 participants – 24 mother-daughter pairs – in **Growing Together**, at Freedom Elementary School in Watsonville. This program designed to increase positive communication between 9-12-year-old girls and their mothers or other significant adult. Growing Together consists of 5 interactive sessions focusing on open communication, family values, changes girls may experience during puberty, relationships, health and hygiene, decision-making and conflict resolution. The program creates a safe space for mothers and daughters to spend quality time together providing opportunities for bonding, exploring their feelings, strengthening their relationship, and sharing dreams and goals. Daughters and parents alike loved this program: 100% felt it helped them increase positive communication with each other, feel more comfortable talking about health and puberty, and more confident exploring their feelings and expectations with one another.



6. Unfortunately, we were not able to offer our college summer program, **Smart Choices**, for graduating middle school girls. This weeklong program takes place at UC Santa Cruz, where the girls experience college life – sleeping in dorm rooms, eating in the dining commons - and workshops/activities on high school, college and career planning, decision-making, goal setting, bullying, assertive refusal skills, media influences, cultural myths and gender stereotypes, strategies for optimal health and wellness, self-defense, yoga, meditation, and running clinics. The UCSC campus is closed, and social distancing in this program would have been impossible.

This year, for the first time, Girls Inc. was able to offer four local scholarships in honor and memory of Jackie McManus, an attorney and community volunteer who served on the initial board of Girls Inc. One of our scholars is Alexis Campos, a student from Pajaro High School, who has been involved in Girls Inc. since the 7th grade. After participating in ECHO, Alexis applied for and was chosen to be a Youth Leader. She will be attending CSUMB in the fall and is planning a career in social work. In Alexis’s own words:

“I loved how Girls Inc. taught me to step outside of my comfort zone. I was able to hone my public speaking skills by coming up with and delivering my own speech on the in front of the girls. It was encouraging to know that none of them were judging me. The program helped prepare us for interviews by teaching us about the power pose, what to wear, and what to say. We also talked about college, health, healthy and unhealthy relationships, careers, and how we can use our voices to affect change.”

In the coming year, we will continue to offer programs virtually until it is safe to return to the schools. Because of the ramifications of the world-wide pandemic, we had to reduce our staff, but are currently evaluating the staffing patterns and job descriptions in light of the organization’s needs going forward. We will be adding staff based on our assessment, to bring us back up to full capacity – with a new organizational structure. During this time, we will also be examining our programs, making changes where needed to improve the experiences and outcomes for our girls.

We hope this brief overview has been informative and provided you with greater insight in what the girls are experiencing at Girls Inc. Your support makes it possible for us to inspire girls to follow their dreams and achieve their goals.

