

Through more than 1,000 affiliates nationwide and in Canada, Girls Incorporated offers programs that support parents in sparking their daughters' learning, encouraging their self-esteem and building their communications skills. The results are brighter futures for young women, whose families have helped them become "strong, smart and bold" in pursuit of their dreams. "We strengthen girls' family relationships and help instill the confidence they will need if they choose to become parents one day," says Girls Incorporated president and CEO Joyce M. Roché. "Every girl offers the promise of two generations of stronger families—their own and the next."



GIRLS INCORPORATED OF MONROE COUNTY

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Award-winning Program: Commit to Be Fit
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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2005 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

A DUAL PURPOSE

The profound impact that issues of self-image can have on adolescent girls is often as confusing to parents as it is detrimental to their daughters' well-being. Girls Incorporated of Monroe County, Indiana, developed Commit to Be Fit to remove communications barriers separating adolescent girls and their parents and replace them with opportunities for them to work together to strengthen their relationships and their family.

"We wanted to focus on health issues, and we are always working on bringing families together," says executive director Dorothy Granger. "Parents can play a vital role in helping their daughters tackle these issues and build self-esteem."

To this end, Commit to Be Fit teams girls and families in activities that range from taking stock of their refrigerators to taking stock of their lives. In the process, the program educates and excites families about becoming and staying more fit as they make and fulfill healthy commitments together.



PARENTS FIND THAT A SHARED COMMITMENT
TO HEALTHIER LIVING BRINGS THEM AND
THEIR DAUGHTERS CLOSER TOGETHER AND
MAKES THEM PARTNERS IN SUCCESS.

—Dorothy Granger, Executive Director, Girls Incorporated of Monroe County

LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE

In the summer of 2004, Girls Incorporated of Monroe County piloted the first Commit to Be Fit classes, now formalized as a six-week, 15-session curriculum that other Girls Incorporated affiliates can use. Parents and daughters move through interactive sessions, covering everything from understanding the basics of nutrition and setting realistic health goals to planning fun, exercise-centered activities families can do together. Participating families—usually a dozen at a time—have choices, including selecting outings for the group, that shape each session.

"One of the most popular outings was rock climbing," says Granger. "When you saw a girl *and* her mom get to the top together—helping, cooperating the whole way—and then saw them celebrate together, you knew that family was going in the right direction."

Girls Incorporated staff enrich the curriculum by finding experts in the community to lead structured, informative discussions and engage girls and their parents in hands-on activities, such as cooking classes and charting nutrition. These staff members continue their involvement with girls and their families through follow-up sessions after the classes end. "Our long-range follow-up is essential to our goals," Granger comments. "We've succeeded only when we see families themselves succeeding months down the road."

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.