



GIRLS INCORPORATED
OF LYNN,
MASSACHUSETTS

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

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

HELPING PARENTS HELP THEIR DAUGHTERS

When teenage girls have babies, their parents often wonder how they can encourage their other daughters to make different decisions. A major focus of the Mi Vida, Mi Viaje (“My Life, My Journey”) program at Girls Incorporated of Lynn, Massachusetts, is helping parents in this situation strengthen their relationships with their daughters who are in middle school in order to reduce their pregnancy risk.

“Research shows that a primary risk factor for teen pregnancy is lack of parent involvement,” says Cheryl Consedine, the program’s Case Manager. “Typically a girl lacks a feeling of connection to her family, or doesn’t feel loved, and there is no communication about risky behaviors and decision-making.”

Twenty girls, ages 11 to 14, and their parents, mostly single mothers, take part in the program. As the program’s Spanish name recognizes, many of the girls in the program are Latino. All have an older sibling who is a teen parent. Monthly workshops focus on building effective parenting skills, increasing parent-child connectedness, and helping families learn from and support each other.



PREVENTING TEEN PREGNANCY IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL GIRL; IT’S ALSO

ABOUT THE PARENT, WHO IS IN THE BEST POSITION TO INFLUENCE HER BEHAVIOR. MI VIDA, MI VIAJE CREATES STRONGER PARENTS WHO IN TURN CAN HELP DAUGHTERS MAKE GOOD CHOICES.

—Patricia A. Driscoll, Executive Director, Girls Incorporated of Lynn, Massachusetts

TEACHING POSITIVE PARENTING

When Cheryl Consedine surveyed the Mi Vida parents about possible topics for the workshops, most said they wanted help in communicating with their daughters more effectively.

“They wanted to learn how to talk without lecturing, how to protect them without being overprotective,” she says. “As single parents with other children and jobs, they have little time to focus on these skills. Our goal was to create a space for that.”

Parents and daughters took part in a five-hour training session, “How to Talk About the Tough Stuff,” that covered a range of topics and activities — from discussing sexuality and values to working toward success in school and role-playing effective strategies for family communication. Parents also gathered one evening per month for dinner and parenting skills training. In one session, for instance, instructors offered strategies for dealing with behavior such as resisting homework and chores, fighting and yelling. Parents learned about and then practiced skills such as giving choices, making compromises and assigning consequences to behavior. Other workshops focused on healthy communication, stress management and community resources.

“Most parents reported that they felt better able to communicate in a healthy way with their teenage daughters and to do a better job setting limits and encouraging good decision-making,” says Consedine, who surveyed parents at the end of the workshop series. “Another common piece of positive feedback was, ‘Now I know I’m not alone.’ They valued the opportunity to hear from other parents in a supportive environment.”

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 strategies 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.

Through their 1,500 program sites 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 LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS

Award-winning Program: Mi Vida, Mi Viaje

Patricia A. Driscoll, Executive Director

Cheryl Consedine, Case Manager

88 Broad Street

Lynn, MA 01902

781-592-9744

www.girlsinclynn.org