

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 TARRANT COUNTY, TEXAS

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Award-winning program: Girls Poetry Jam
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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

SUPPORT FOR WORKING PARENTS

For single parents working to build a brighter future for their families, pitfalls for their children such as poor grades, substance abuse or teen pregnancy are a constant concern. The Girls Poetry Jam at Girls Incorporated of Tarrant County, Texas, helps families navigate such challenges by bringing mothers and daughters closer together and opening the door to other programs that address those issues.

More than 30 girls from sixth grade through high school participate in the poetry jams. When their parents—mostly working, single mothers—attend the events, they also find out about other ways Girls Incorporated supports families, with resources like tutoring, college and career counseling, and programs for their daughters on money management, preventing teen pregnancy, and resisting drugs and alcohol.

“Poetry was the hook with this program, but there’s much more to it,” says CEO Susan Herman. “The girls develop skills that will enrich and advance their lives. They learn the power of public speaking. They’re reading, researching and writing, overcoming fears and finding their voice. Those achievements lead to college and career options.”

BONDING THROUGH CREATIVITY

“Single mothers are overwhelmed just trying to make a living,” says Becky Balarin, Director of Girls Programming. “Many don’t have a formal education and work more than one job. Several families came here from New Orleans to rebuild their lives. When they see their daughters accomplishing things, gaining a sense of their own independence and setting higher goals for their lives, it takes a lot of pressure off the family.”

With tools as deceptively simple as a pad, a pencil and a microphone, these girls gain self-confidence and respect for others. Their grades often improve; shy girls open up and make new friends; most importantly, the poetry makes a lasting, positive impact on the girls’ relationships at home.

Through poetry, the girls express their feelings for their mothers in a way they rarely, if ever, did before at home. “Those things aren’t always easy to discuss with your mom,” says Balarin. “Their mothers recognize that and it builds a stronger bond between them, which helps resolve conflicts and reduces stress at home.”

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.



PARENTS ARE AMAZED WHEN THEY
SEE THEIR DAUGHTERS EXPRESSING
THEMSELVES SO CREATIVELY. GIRLS
POETRY JAM HELPS MOTHERS INTERACT
WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN A NEW LIGHT
AND IMPROVES THEIR COMMUNICATION.

—Becky Balarin, Director of Girls Programming, Girls Incorporated of Tarrant County