working group on Girls of Schenectady, Inc.

Annual Report 2018

Dedicated to building connections that support girls in developing their strengths and inspiring them to believe in their voices.

Dear Friends,

As I complete my term as Board President, I want to express my deep gratitude to the WGGS community. The Board, Planning Committee, School Clinicians, Muses, GDO workshop facilitators – nearly 100 volunteers in all – are an incomparable group of women for whom my admiration and gratitude continually grows.

Our belief in the strengths and abilities of girls to succeed is strong. We continue to find that helping girls build meaningful connections for healthy relationships is key to a successful future. Providing safe spaces for girls to develop their own voices and exposing them to opportunities that give support to creating their own stories is a step in that direction. Our new guiding theme reflects this belief:

Finding Your Voice: Brave Brilliant Resilient

The WGGS continues to evolve as we learn more about how best to serve the girls and community in Schenectady. This year we began hosting Mother-Daughter circles at two of our middle schools. Mothers and daughters met weekly for 6 weeks with 2 muses and a school Social Worker for conversations, crafts, yoga and nourishment. We plan to continue and expand this program next year. We also partnered with the Boys and Girls Club to provide Girls' Circles during the 21st Century After School Program at 2 middle school sites. In addition, we have connected with the Union College Association for Women in Math who planned a field trip to the college for a group of girls – enlarging their worlds and building those stories.

On a final note, we are looking forward to our collaboration with The Schenectady Foundation and Mentor Link, a vehicle that will help us locate, recruit and train our inspirational volunteer Muses.

Gwynne DeLong
Co-President

Girls' Day Out 2017 – Still I Rise

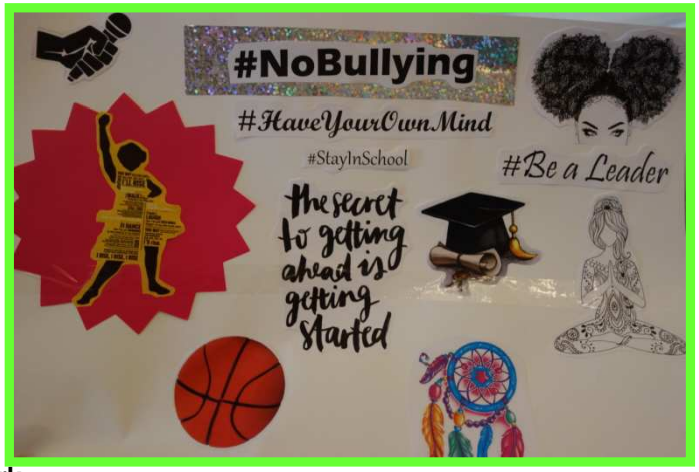
Still I Rise

My veins are like chains
Tied to my own blood
A flood of struggles, yet
Sometimes that makes me realize
that my own bloodline
could bring me to my demise
Yet, **Still I Rise**

Imagine this,
You look at ya friend's wrist
Guess what is?
You can see their once silent cries
Yet, **Still I Rise**

Feeling so confused
Feeling so abused
Reality is its own form of insanity
Yet, I got all this spark in my eyes
That says.....**Still I Rise**

A window to the past
A flash
So fast a captured victor
An eternal picture
To memorize why
Still I Rise



Written by Ices Sellie from Central Park

On November 16, 150 seventh grade girls from the Schenectady City SD spent the day at Glen Sanders Mansion where they enjoyed motivational speakers and inspirational workshops. They gained insight into what makes relationships healthy, how to gracefully survive seventh grade, how to handle stress, how to deal with bullying, and explored their creative sides with art, dance, music, poetry and drumming. At day's end, the girls went home with backpacks filled with donated treats, necessities and hooded sweatshirts bearing our theme: Still I Rise, inspired by the poem of the same name by Maya Angelou.

Girls' Circles

Girls' Circles provide a safe, non-judgmental space where girls and muses can talk about issues of importance to the girls such as how to cope with bullying, maintain good friendships, and deal with stress. Each circle has a clinician. Circles are held on a weekly basis during the school day or after school.

"When I first joined Girls' Circle, it was not what I expected it to be. I really thought it was about eating pizza and making fun projects. But, I was totally wrong. Girls' Circle is so much more. You actually talk about things that young females should be able to talk about. Not only do we talk about normal teen things, we also get asked questions about what is going on today in the real world. That makes you think so much deeper.

I feel Girls' Circle has made me a much more open person. Now I can't wait to go to Girls' Circle just to talk and open up more, which I feel like is definitely making me a more positive person – just to be able to get stuff off my chest more often." ~ 8th grade girl from Mont Pleasant Middle School

"I have found through my experience that the program is a safe space for our girls to discuss important topics, express themselves and, as clinicians, we have a unique opportunity to help these girls learn about themselves and build their confidence. I truly believe that Girls' Circle has the potential to create positive impact on our young female students." ~ SCSD Social Worker

Spring Field Trips to Colleges

Expanding Horizons – Envisioning Futures

Union College Tour

After a welcome by the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) students, the girls made their way to Golub House. There, they broke up into three smaller groups, made introductions and did a math activity. From there they headed to the Upper Class Dining Hall where they were treated to lunch, as Union College provided free meal passes. After lunch the girls were taken on an informal tour of the campus. They visited Visual Arts, Theatre/Dance, the Nott Memorial and Jackson's Garden. After the tour, they reconvened at Golub House to chat with the AWM students about their math experiences, what it's like to be at college, and the different opportunities available.

SCCC Mentoring Luncheon

A group of our 8th – 12th grade girls visited Schenectady County Community College in April. They were welcomed by faculty, staff and students with a brief introduction to making connections and exploring possibilities. From there, they were taken on a tour and had opportunities to explore the Culinary, Biotech and Music departments. The girls were treated to a delicious lunch in the Van Curler Room where they learned about the importance of making great first impressions, etiquette, and the importance of getting an education. They had time to ask questions of current SCCC students, and finished the trip with a "Love Yourself First" activity.

Inspiration and Creativity

Youth Summit Trip

Eleven girls, four Muses, a social worker and the WGGS co-presidents attended the Youth Summit in Albany, sponsored by the NYS Association of Black & Hispanic Legislators.

The theme was "On This Journey, There is Still #HOPE". The girls enjoyed an inspirational multi-media journey through the past celebrating those who have laid the foundation on which we stand. Leaders from different time periods were portrayed through short skits, film, powerful statements, speeches and songs. Lunch was provided and there was time for the girls to chat with presenters in the mall.

C.R.E.A.T.E Studio Trip

Both Schenectady High School and Steinmetz Career & Leadership Academy Girls' Circle groups ended their year with a visit to the C.R.E.A.T.E. Community Studio for expressive arts, therapy and empowerment. Both groups had very inspirational and empowering mornings creating artwork. It was a super positive experience for the girls, and they were encouraging each other while painting. Some of the messages they included in their paintings were:

- "Difficult Roads often Lead to Beautiful Destinations."
- "We accept the love we think we deserve!"
- "Through life you have to be careful who you depend on and trust."

The SHS group began the trip with breakfast at Union Café and the SCLA young women had lunch at United Buffet.

"GC gives different types of girls an escape. If it's a girl that is often getting negative attention they can go somewhere they are invited and welcomed. The quiet girl is often looking for an escape from the usual middle school chaos." ~ SCSD Social Worker

Celebration Dinner

Our Celebration Dinner is a culmination of the year's growth and connection. Each girl invites a woman in her life who is important to her, and they celebrate together in an evening of connection, inspiration, and empowerment. We have many speakers throughout the evening, including girls, Muses, parents, clinicians, and school officials. Each girl reflects upon her year in her Girls' Circle, and she is encouraged to share how her experiences have helped her grow, find her strengths, and develop her distinctive voice.

One of our graduating seniors spoke about how her participation in Girls' Circles since 7th grade has helped her reach her goals.

"We were able to have some insightful conversations about how women are portrayed in the media and in society, how that feels, and we talked about women who made a positive impact. I think the girls liked sharing their dreams and goals for the future." ~ SCSD Clinician

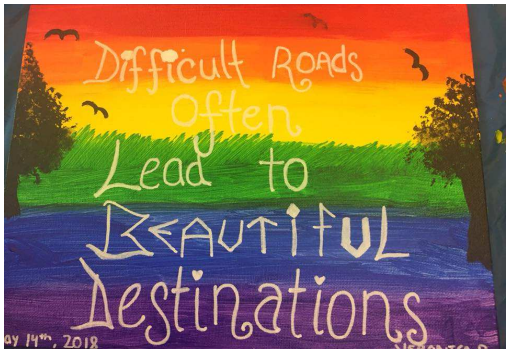
Our Partners

Affiliate Organizations

American Association of University Women
Boys & Girls Club of Schenectady
Boys Day Out Youth Enrichment Services
Court Appointed Special Advocates
Girls Incorporated of the Capital Region
League of Women Voters of Schenectady County
New York State United Teachers
SAFE Inc. of Schenectady
Schenectady City School District
Schenectady County Public Library
Union College Assoc. for Women in Math
Union College Kenney Community Center
YWCA NorthEastern NY

Donors and Sponsors

The Schenectady Foundation
The Review Foundation
The Wright Family Foundation
William Gundry Broughton Foundation
Miriam Butzel & the Butzel Family Foundation
First Reformed Church
Union Presbyterian Church
Schenectady Federation of Teachers
Mohawk Honda
Stewarts
GE Matching Fund
Amazon Smile



We Thank You!

Our Circles of Support

Gold Circle ($250 plus)

William G. Byrnes
Dianne Crozier
Gwynne DeLong
Janet & Richard Evans
Fenimore Asset Management
Gail Hill Gordon
Nahla & Genghis Kahn
Teresa M. Kennedy
Pauline and Don Kinsella
Don Liebers & Ann Reilly
Mark & Terri Little
Jean & Tom Plis
Melanie Puorto-Conte
Mohawk Honda
Kathe R. Sheehan
Joanne & Peter Tobiessen
Joanne Wolcott

Silver Circle ($100 - $249)

Kay Ackerman
Ann Bish
Karen Bradley
Cioffe · Slezak · Wildegrube, P.C.
Nettie Crossman
Suzanne DeWald, DeWald Consulting
Louise DiFabbio
Karen Draper
Barbara Dworkin
Celine Edwards
Robin Esposito
John Fenaroli & Susan Durgan
Dennis Green
Jeanne Murray Hagerty
F. Julia Helfman
Analine Hicks
Tanya Hull
Hon. Karen B. Johnson
Teresa A. Kennedy
Robert & Elaine Kennedy
Kari LaFontaine
Laura LaFontaine
Mauro & Susan Lapetina
Catherine Lewis
Barbara Andre Maxwell
Gary McCarthy
Kerrie C. Messler
Sarah Mukerji
Byron & Lynda Nichols
Cheryl Olsen
Patrick and Barbara O'Reilly
Patricia Paser
Elise Russo
Lydia & Ralph Savage
Helga A. Schroeter
Catherine Snyder
Christine Stankavich
Michelle Wildegrube, Esq.

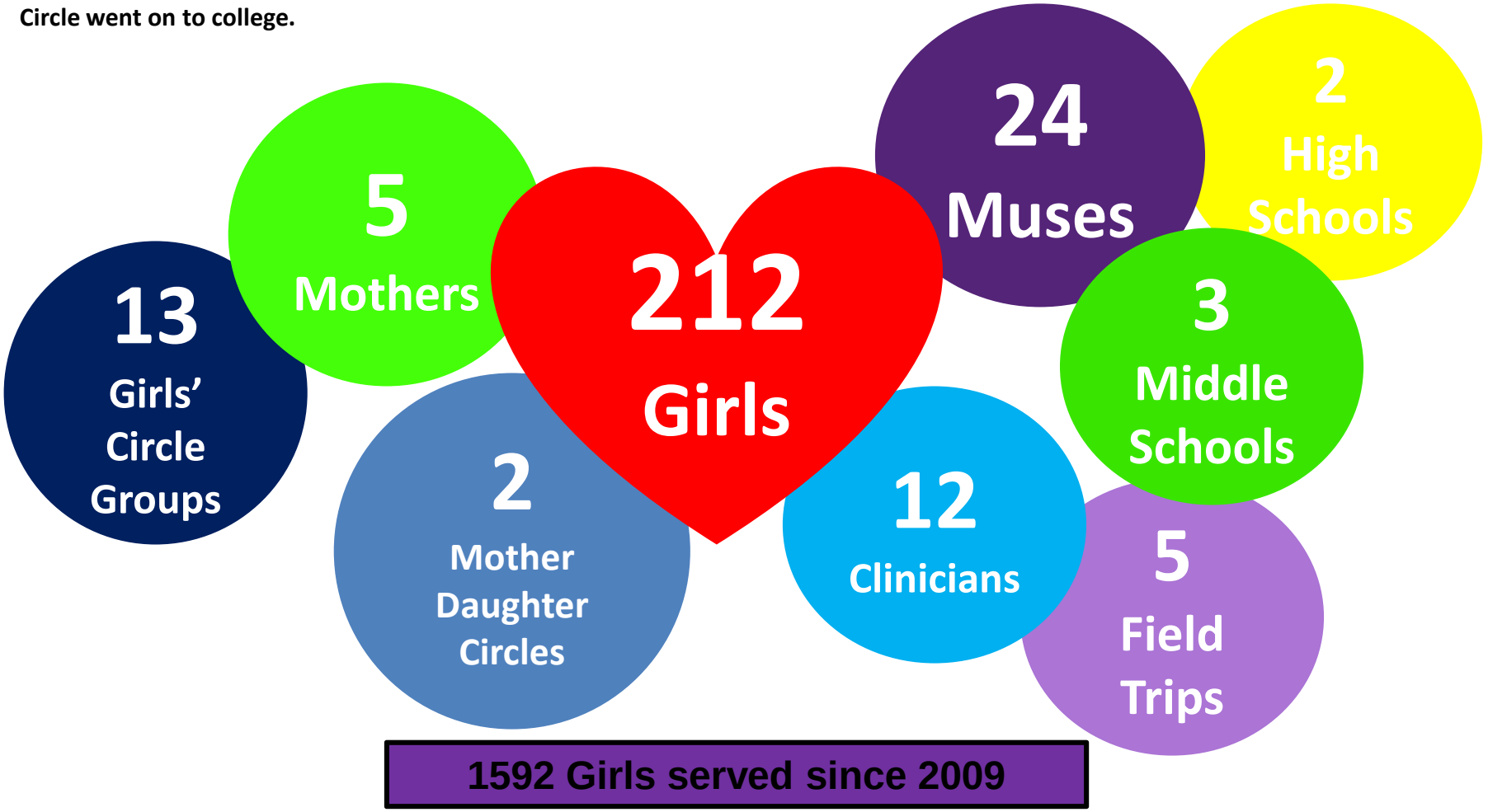
Circle of Friends ($25 - $99)

Mike Audie
Elaine Bair
Jane Baldauf
Karim Becker
Ebony Belmar
Katie Beltramo
Mr. & Mrs. John Black
Maxine Brisport
Jean & Robert Cerone
Bernadette Cole Slaughter
Joanne Coppola
Shellly DeAngelus
Lauren DeJong
Colleen Draper
Joan Elliot
Melanie Farina
Cynthia Farmer
John & Margaret Foley
Donna Fowler
Marina Franchild
Michelle Gabriel
Pat & Bruce Goodale
Joseph & Ann Gotwals
Connie Hayner
Heather Hutchison
Susan Killeen
Catherine LaFontaine
Mr. & Mrs. Bernard LaGrave
Ms Lee Lounsbury & Mr. Jack Bailly
Marge Maas
Helen MacDonald
Lauren & Paul Matarazzo
Janet Sapio Mayta
Christine McGurrin
Kathryn Molloy
Leslie Neustadt
Judy Nocera
Sue O'Hara
Mary Lynn Olbrych
Zoe Oxley
Laura Rappaport
Kenneth & Joanne Riddett
Ann Rogan
Elise Russo
Gregory & Barbara Sauer
Susanna Sherwood
Kim Siciliano
Angela Tatem
Nancy & Roy Thornton
Andrea Tote
Barbara Walton
Tom & Stephanie West
Sharon & Ben Wiles
Kerrie Wolf-Piechota
Julie Zeigler
Kris Zeigler

We Are Thriving!

The Working Group on Girls provides support to girls for their personal, social and emotional development. We believe that girls who are able to create and sustain healthy relationships, understand and talk about feelings and find their own true voices develop independence and ultimately feel good about themselves. While these objectives are hard to measure, we do acquire data on how girls who participate in our programs are doing in school.

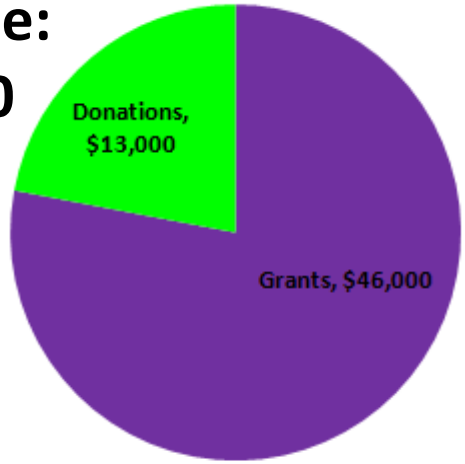
During the 2017-2018 school year, the SCSD 7th – 12th grade girls who participated in Girls' Circles compared to girls in the SCSD who did not participate had better attendance and fewer disciplinary reports and out of school suspensions. It was also noted that girls who continued participation in High School were more likely to be on track for graduation. Last year, all seniors in our High School Circle went on to college.



1592 Girls served since 2009

Financials: 7/17 – 6/18

Revenue: $59,000



Annual Budget: $64,360

Program: $29,600
- **Staff: $26,800**
- **Operating Expenses: $6,760**
- **Marketing: $1,000**
- **Misc: $200**

Total Expenditures: $60,410

WGGS has 2 part time paid staff.

We have approximately 100 volunteers that accrued 3000 volunteer hours this fiscal year.

100 % of our donations stay in the community

Leadership & Board Members

Gwynne DeLong
Board Co - President

Dianne Crozier
Board Co - President

Karen Draper
Vice President

Katie Beltramo
Secretary

Nahla Kahn
Treasurer

Laura LaFontaine
Executive Director

Jane Baldauf

Ebony Belmar

Suzanne DeWald

Gail Gordon

Tanya Hull

Melanie Puorto-Conte

Kerrie Wolf - Piechota

Miranda Rand

Elise Russo