

Girls Inc.: Raising Strong Women for a Strong Future

By Tess Howat



Ashli Fragomeni, Executive Director of Girls Inc. of the Greater Capital Region

Girls Inc.'s history of female empowerment is long and true. Founded in 1864, Girls Inc., originally named The Girls Clubs of America until a change in 1990, is a nonprofit that was set in place to help girls and young women navigate the aftermath of the Civil War. In 2001, the Schenectady Girls Club founded in 1937 and the Albany Girls Club founded in 1961 merged to become Girls Inc. of the Greater Capital Region. Now, 156 years later, Girls Inc.

provides research-based programming to girls ages five and up in the form of summer camps, after school care, Eureka! Programming and other outreach and events. Girls Inc. focuses on providing girls and young women with programming in six areas: leadership and community action, career and life planning, sports and adventure, self-reliance and life skills, culture and heritage and health. I recently spoke with Ashli Fragomeni, Executive Director of Girls Inc. of the Greater Capital Region about what Girls Inc. does and why it's so important.

Ashli's work is inspired by the belief that providing opportunities to girls and young women is some of the most important work someone can be a part of, saying "We have the unique opportunity as a nonprofit focused on girls and young women to be a springboard for females looking to learn, aspire and be everything they ever wanted. We want girls to feel confident



in their friendships, relationships, educational opportunities, career paths, voices, ideas, talents and passions. There is no one more primed to create positive change in our world than a girl who is strong, smart AND bold!"

When COVID-19 hit, Girls Inc. took to the drawing board to find out how they could adapt to serve the changing needs of the Capital area community, hoping to provide the girls with as much guidance as possible during the pandemic. The organization has been providing weekly "activity packs" with both indoor and outdoor activities, crafts, lessons, snacks and more to give as much of "the Girls Inc. experience" to the girls as possible without being able to meet all together. In addition to sending out activity packs, Ashli says that Girls Inc. plans to incorporate an outreach element by having staff travel the area to safely engage with girls they already serve and meet new girls along the way. Girls Inc. has also somewhat virtualized its Eureka! program, a free five-year commitment program that introduces girls to STEM, personal development, sports, mentorship and career exploration, preparing them for the next step in their education after high school.

No matter what, Girls Inc. does everything it can to provide a safe place for girls and young women to learn how to take care of themselves in all aspects of life, as well as encourage them to embrace and be proud of who they are.

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