



The Girls' Advocate

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Girls Say What they Need!

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Young Latinas Come Together

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The Girls' Advocate is published quarterly. Submissions and calendar events may be e-mailed to mc.admin@morrisonkidsorg or sent to:

Our New Address as of August 15

Pam Patton
1500 NE Irving St. Suite 250
Portland, OR 97232

For more information about *The Girls' Advocate* or to become a member of the Coalition of Advocates for Equal Access for Girls, contact Pam Patton at 503.233.4356 *Help us be a voice for girls and girls' needs in Oregon!*

Editing, design and layout by:
Laura Eccles

On May 17, 2005 over 75 Latina young women from several Salem/Keizer high schools (North, Cascade, South, McKay, Sprague and West) came together to discuss some of the gaps, barriers and strengths they experience within their schools and communities. The meeting was initiated by a few strong advocates from the schools who attended the Coalition's Regional meeting that took place in February of this year to address these issues. The educators and service providers at the Regional meeting felt strongly that Latina young women be given an opportunity to discuss these issues in order to gain a better understanding of the experiences, needs and strengths of young Latina women and how community members can best support and nurture them. Since one of the fundamental premises of the Coalition is to ensure girls and young women have a voice in their lives and communities we supported this idea by facilitating the discussion and ensuring that their input reaches those who can contribute to change.

The girls responded to several questions that addressed the challenges and barriers they face. They provided valuable insight into how adults can support them and contribute to their success.

What are your issues and concerns?

- Getting good grades to get to college;
- Money, funding, scholarships;
- Making the world understand us;
- Fighting stereotypes;
- Being a housewife;
- Peer pressure;
- Family tension and problems;
- Making our parents proud;
- Teachers who don't understand us;
- Money is a barrier to getting into sports;
- Isolated and not being understood by peers of other cultures.
- Life is full of problems; it is up to us to turn it around!

"Help Latinas go to College!"

Is your opinion valued and accepted?

Why or why not?

- Sometimes; at school not at home;
- Not much; people might listen but they don't DO anything.
- Our parents and people at school don't have time to listen to us or do something about what we need.
- We care about our school and we are powerful together. and we **must** speak up.

What is your opinion about and obstacles to higher education?

- No support from family or teachers;
- Friends and/or money, transportation, language, and don't have good grades or access to scholarships (non-documented);
- Boys (we lose ourselves/our motivation)
- Our families ("You're just a Latina, you don't need to go to college.");
- Not very many Latina girls go to college.
- *We get judged for what other people have done in the past* (extend yourself beyond what they think of you).

Do you make decisions based on your feelings or peer pressure?

- Peer pressure and feelings;
- It depends on the person;
- Feelings!
- Peer pressure influences you, but you can take a stand;
- 60% own intuition and feelings; 40% peer pressure;
- We make decisions based on our feelings, but many times our friends influence us; it depends on us whether we give in.

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Young Latinas Continued

Are there things you have done or seen that you wish you could change?

- § Change the way we act; overcome the stereotypes.
- § Find opportunities other than flirting;
- § Change involvement in gangs, getting pregnant; drinking;
- § We don't have adults to talk to, our parents are old fashioned about stuff;
- § Sometimes we should talk to our parents because they will help us;
- § We learn from the things we have done;
- § We need more Latina programs and more support from adults;
- § Racism and stereotypes in high schools and student services (eg., sports, Cinco de Mayo celebration; no Latina clubs or Latina bulletins);
- § We should be more organized, making a stomp instead of a step.
- § Mistakes help you find the solutions. Learn from them to improve yourself.
- § We should be grateful to have the opportunity and we should take advantage of it. Many people would be grateful to be where we are.
- § We underestimate how much time we have to get our credits and we skip class.

"Talk to us, listen, and help us reach our goals."

What can adults do to help young Latina girls feel good about themselves and be successful?

- § Inform us about opportunities that are available to us;
- § Give us strict rules and get involved;
- § Listen-don't talk! Put yourself in our place;
- § Encouragement, advice, support our feelings, understand us;
- § Respect our opinions; trust us, believe in us;
- § Don't let us fall or fail because of our culture;
- § Staff need training on cultural awareness;
- § More ESL classes; more Hispanic teachers;
- § Take time; get comfortable;
- § We need adults that are bilingual.

"We need people to believe in us as Latinas"

When talking about sex, drugs, alcohol, who are the adults you go to and why?

- § Parents don't understand, don't listen, they judge us and we're afraid of being judged;
- § We go to siblings and friends; but we should talk to our parents and establish communication;
- § Teachers, family members; someone that is not critical;
- § Someone other than parents that will take action;
- § Our parents tell us not to open our legs, but they don't tell us why not;
- § Parents can help us by listening;
- § Sometimes, parents assume you are doing what you are just asking about;
- § There are a lot of people that do care; our mothers care.

Interview with Emily Ryan by Laura Eccles



Emily Ryan of the Multnomah County Youth Commission has a lot to teach us as advocates and service providers as well as other young women who face challenges that teenage girls just shouldn't have to face. At sixteen she was kicked out of her own house and left to *navigate the system* on her own. She has been in various different programs in Portland, from youth shelters and case management programs to mental health programs and adult homeless shelters, Emily knows *the system* well. She reports that much of the case management she received in the various programs was very helpful to her. The case managers whom she felt were most helpful were those that provided her with information and resources of all that was available to her. She said she never would have known about many opportunities without the care and dedication of her case managers. When speaking about one in particular, she said "she pushed me to reach my full potential" and that she thanks her all the time for this. Even though it is hard to be pushed at times, Emily said it was important that someone was behind her, believing in her and reminding her of all that she could do and be in the world.

Case management wasn't always helpful though. During her last year of high school she was living at a youth shelter and the rules of the program were rigid and difficult to maintain. While she was trying to finish high school and focus on her studies, the program required that she fill out multiple job applications and go on interviews. While she stressed the importance of case managers pushing her, she explained certain guidelines are not realistic and do not fit everyone's unique needs. Factors like these often contribute to a stigma that many youth have about case management. In this particular situation she ended up leaving the program and staying at a friend's house that wasn't an ideal place for her, all detracting her attention from school which she knew should have been her first priority if she wanted to be successful.

President's Notes

Pam Patton
President of the
Coalition of Advocates
for Equal Access for Girls



Report on the 2005 Legislative Session

Here we go again, experiencing the same thing that happened two years ago for the 2003 Legislative Session where we delayed the July newsletter in hopes that the session would end and I could give you the final outcome the 2005 Session had on services for girls and young women. Unfortunately the session continues and the end is not in site. But I can tell you a few things to this point:

- Ø OYA Young Women's Workgroup will begin implementing the recommendations from the Report that was presented and accepted by the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee as soon as the session ends and OYA is clear on it's budget. (See the April 2005 newsletter for more information.)
- Ø Youth Investment funds should continue at the "essential level" (last biennium's) in the Oregon Commission on Children and Families' (OCCF) budget, with at least 50% of the dollars going to girls.
- Ø The Juvenile Crime Prevention program is moving to OCCF and both the Senate and House Budget Committees are proposing funding at 6.3 million.
- Ø DHS's budget funds existing School Based Health Clinics, plus adds \$500,000 to expand the number of counties providing SBHC by five.
- Ø The Senate and the House passed HB 2202, the Homeless and Runaway Youth bill which designated OCCF to coordinate, in collaboration with the Partners for Children and Families a statewide planning of services to homeless youth, runaways and their families.

The Coalition will continue to focus on girls in juvenile justice and on girl's success in education particularly Latina young women. At our September Coalition meeting we will set what we are going to do as an organization in the next year, hear what you believe our priorities should be and what you, our members, are willing and interested in working on. If you want to have your voice heard on where the Coalition should go over the next year please join us on September 28th, from noon to 2:00 p.m. at Rosemont. Or email me (pam.patton@morrisonkids.org) with your ideas where and how you are interested in investing your time. This is your chance to work side by side with other advocates or to contribute on your own to help change the future for the girls and young women of Oregon.

Emily Ryan Continued...

Now, at age 20, Emily has graduated from high school, is living in her own apartment, working three jobs, and going to college. She spends much of her time as a member of the Multnomah County Youth Commission (MYC) and working with the Youth Collective Action Research for Empowerment. In her various roles, Emily finds herself, in her words, "rubbing elbows" with the mayor, attending city council meetings, and researching issues of youth employment for the Mayor's business summit.

On leadership and advocacy, Emily sees so much potential in many of her female peers. She says that many young women have leadership abilities that are not harnessed. She believes that young people often really want to make change in their lives, but they need someone to show them how to do it and give them guidance to find resources that will help them achieve their dreams. At the Multnomah Youth Commission, Emily encourages young people who may not have a lot of experience in leadership roles but who could greatly benefit from and learn necessary skills by getting involved with the MYC.

When asked about some of the barriers that young people involved in the system face in leadership and advocacy, Emily thinks that some do not have case managers who push them in the right way. Also for many young women, living on the streets or moving from place to place takes a huge toll, physically and mentally. For girls it is especially difficult when you are desperately trying to get your basic hygiene needs met, find clothes that fit you, and making sure you have a safe place to sleep. When asked what advice she would give to young women who are experiencing challenges such as homelessness and foster care and who want to advocate for themselves, she says to "strive for your goals and tell people your dreams; introduce yourself to people and network; and continuously communicate effectively to people and to tell your story."

Emily says that the Multnomah Youth Commission opened up a new world for her. She is very interested in continuing to work in politics. She plans to get a political science degree and then on to a law degree eventually. One day, she plans to run for US Senate but for now, she will remain (lucky for us and other youth in Multnomah County) involved in local politics.

For More information about the Multnomah County Youth Commission,
Please visit <http://www.ourcommission.org/youth/mycindex3.shtm>.

Calendar of Events

Coalition Meetings for 2005

(Meetings take place on the fourth Wednesday of every other month and the third Wed. in November.)

July 27th * September 28th * November 16th

All meetings will be held from **12:00 - 2:00 pm** at Rosemont School
9911 SE Mt. Scott Blvd., Portland.

All members are welcome to attend! For directions, call (503) 777-8090

Women's Equality Day Celebrating Women's Right to Vote!

August 26, 2005, marks the 85th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women's right to vote.

Did you know?

“When nations were ranked for women's involvement in national legislatures and governments, the **U.S. was 61st**. Rwanda was first, followed by Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark. Iraq, with its new national assembly, ranked 15th. **In the U.S. women are at just 14% in the U.S. House and Senate.**”

girls inc.® Girls Inc. of Northwest Oregon

Girls' Initiative Network announces its new name
Girls Inc. of Northwest Oregon!

As an affiliate of Girls Inc. National we join in their mission-
Inspiring girls to be strong, smart and bold!

In the upcoming year, we are continuing our after school empowerment programs with enhanced curriculum. We also are starting a new program-Go Onward, for girls and young women ages 8-21 who are in, or transitioning from residential programs and foster care.

Please call or email Girls Inc. of NW Oregon for more information on any of our programs. 503.230.0054 info@girlsincnworegon.org

Advocacy Toolkit Update

The *Girls Advocacy Toolkit* (Facilitator's Guide and Girl's Workbook) will be printed this summer. Look for an email announcement when it is time for distribution, but if you would like to put your name on a list to ensure that you get your **FREE** copy please call or email us now!

Many thanks to the Equity Foundation for a generous grant enabling us to print more copies to distribute throughout the state.

503.233.4356 pam.patton@morrisonkids.org



COALITION OF ADVOCATES
FOR EQUAL ACCESS
FOR GIRLS
1500 NE IRVING SUITE 250
PORTLAND, OR 97232