

A Report

on the

2010



Girls of Promise
WOMEN'S FOUNDATION OF ARKANSAS



by

Women's Foundation of Arkansas

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The Program

“Girls of Promise” is the longest running program initiative of the Women’s Foundation of Arkansas. Since the first conference held at UALR in 2000, this initiative has expanded to five sites around the state and introduced thousands of 8th grade girls to information about careers related to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) while giving them the opportunity to meet with women professionals for greater understanding of their own potential and power. These events have encouraged girls to pursue academic excellence in their high school and college years.



The “Girls of Promise” program aims to encourage girls at a time in their life when they tend to lose interest in science.

Eighth grade is a pivotal age when girls begin to internalize negative stereotypes that discourage academic achievement and denigrate those who do not conform to peer expectations and social pressures. These conferences congratulate girls for their current success and future potential, and give girls the chance to visualize what they can become if they aim high and continue to achieve. What’s more, when girls hear from women in these roles they see that - with hard work and support - careers in these fields are attainable and rewarding.

Girls of Promise 2010

Five conferences were held in 2010, reaching 258 young women across the state. Attendance figures are as follows:

University of Arkansas -LR	39
Arkansas Tech University	56
SouthArk Community College	40
Northwest AR Community College	79
Arkansas State University	44

Post-conference evaluations completed by students, chaperones and volunteers all speak to a successful conference series. To quote one chaperone: *“I just want to compliment you and your staff and volunteers on the excellent conference this past Saturday ... Endless opportunities for 8th grade girls to meet and talk to professional women in a variety of fields were definitely present. A well-organized schedule that kept the girls busy but allowed time for them to converse was also beneficial. Lastly, girls of different backgrounds (race, socio-economic, geography) spent time together to realize that girls are girls no matter what and they will always share that common bond and experience as they move through their professional lives...”*

The acclaim “Girls of Promise” enjoys in the local communities hosting the conferences has enabled the Foundation to draw highly qualified professional women as speakers and role models year after year. This year’s conferences utilized the talents of keynote speakers Mrs. Ginger Beebe, First Lady of Arkansas; Dr. Janet Ply, Managing Partner of Pendere, Inc; Stephanie Gardner, Pham.D., Ed.D., Dean of UAMS College of Pharmacy; Dr. Mary Ann Campbell, President of Money Magic, Inc.; Dr. Margaret A. Cavanaugh, Deputy Assistant Director of Geosciences at the National Science Institute.; and Katherine A. Deck, Director of the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas

In addition to the keynote speakers, over 30 speakers were utilized for the break-out sessions for the girls. Teams of girls attended four break-out sessions each, allowing them to be introduced to all of the STEM fields. Break-out sessions are structured so that the speakers not only share their work verbally, but engage the young women in a hands-on exercise to involve them more deeply in the intricacies of that speaker's particular profession. This year conference attendees engaged in activities such as extracting DNA, finding micro-meteorites, creating nutritional menus, plotting the course of light and many more. A "Speaker Extravaganza" was added to the day's schedule this year so that the girls had the opportunity to visit with all of the speakers presenting at the conferences, not just those to whose sessions they were assigned. This was a welcomed addition, giving the girls time to move around freely and interact one-on-one with the presenters.

The women volunteering for the conferences carry their own credentials – corporate business-women, UAMS students, bank executives, corporate and non-profit board members and so on. The concentration of women succeeding and/or pursuing careers in the STEM fields present at this - and past - year's conferences visibly demonstrates the over-arching message that women CAN and DO succeed in careers involving math, science, technology and engineering. This year's presenters included mechanical engineer, videographer, economist, nontechnology researcher, Nurse Practitioner, geologist, bank executive, information technology dean, chef, firefighters and many more!



Ultimately, the conferences are about the young women attending. Pre-conference surveys paint pictures of small-town young women with small-views of career opportunities for those interested in the STEM fields. When asked if they knew women in these fields, the overwhelming response was no. Second in the list of responses to this question was either "math teacher" or "science teacher". It is no wonder that the vast majority of girls in Arkansas do not pursue the myriad career opportunities utilizing STEM disciplines.

Post-conference surveys paint a much different portrait of these same young women. A sampling of responses:

"It was the best way to learn more things about the opportunities of careers and the many ways to make a lifetime of friends. Thank you for letting me explore new things and ideas and also, this conference helped me have confidence in myself to meet new people and do different things."

"It was wonderful and inspirational".

"I came because I thought maybe it would help me become more successful in my life. Thanks so much for the time to teach me and support me with details for my older life. "

"I learned I can do anything and be anything I want to be."

Girls of Promise – Arkansas Tech University

Russellville, AR

Saturday, February 6, 2010

Recruitment Goal : 50 girls

Registered: 61

Volunteer Hours: 311

Attended: 56

Funds Raised: \$6,405.73

Arkansas Tech signed an agreement this spring committing to be a Campus Partner as long as possible. Keynote speaker at this year's conference was Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., Dean of UAMS College of Pharmacy. Other speakers included First Lady Ginger Beebe; Jo Alice Blondin, Ph.D., Chancellor of ATU-Ozark and Dr. Patricia Buford, Department Head and Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at ATU.

The GoP-Tech committee began meeting in December 2009, with Jill Brown serving as Chair. The committee met bi-weekly from that time until the day of the conference. The committee compiled an after-event report and has met with WFA Staff for a debriefing session on the 2010 conference. Planning for 2011 began in June.

Girls of Promise – Arkansas State University 2010

Jonesboro, AR

Saturday, February 20, 2010

Recruitment Goal: 50 girls

Registered: 52

Volunteer Hours: 149

Attended: 44

Funds Raised: \$1,475

ASU signed an agreement committing to be a Campus Partner indefinitely. Keynote speaker for this conference was Dr. Mary Ann Campbell, President of Money Magic, Inc. Other speakers included Dr. Susan Hanrahan, Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Professions; Linda Meyers, Assistant Director of the Arkansas Discovery Network and Shannon M. Vinson, Captain in the USAF.

A formal local committee was not formed for the 2010 conference, though local women associated with ASU (staff and students) and the American Association of University Women-Jonesboro Branch served as an informal committee with the WFA staff. A wrap-up meeting was held in May, 2010 and evaluation given. Recruiting for the 2011 committee began in June.

Girls of Promise – South Arkansas Community College 2010

El Dorado, AR

Saturday, March 6, 2010

Recruitment Goal: 100 girls

Registered: 85

Volunteer Hours: 333 at conference

Attended: 40

Funds Raised: \$4,890

SouthArk signed an agreement committing to host GoP conferences for 3 years and evaluate the partnership at the end of that time frame. Keynote speaker for this year's conference was Dr. Janet K. Ply, Managing Partner of Pendere Inc. Other speakers included First Lady Ginger Beebe; Dr. Kristi Elia, owner of Kristi Mitchell Elia, DDS; Laura Goadrich, Dean of Cyber Information Technology at Bossier Parish Community College and Barbara R. Jones, Ph.D., President of SouthArk Community College.

The GoP-SouthArk Committee, chaired by Carolyn Smith, began meeting in the fall of last year. WFA staff met with them in January to review the Tool Kit. The committee has held a wrap-up meeting and has submitted their evaluation report.

Girls of Promise – University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Little Rock, AR

April 17, 2010

Recruitment Goal: 100 girls

Registered: 57

Attended: 39

Volunteer Hours: 374

Funds Raised: \$8,072.50

UALR signed an agreement committing to be a Campus Partner indefinitely. Keynote speaker was Dr. Margaret A. Cavanaugh, Deputy Assistant Director of Geosciences at the National Science Institute. Other presenters included First Lady Ginger Beebe; Chelsea Ward, Associate Director of Admissions, UALR; and serving as emcee, Jessica Dean, News Correspondent and Anchorwoman, KATV, Channel 7.

The GoP-UALR Committee, chaired by Diane LaFollette, first met in February. The committee met bi-weekly to share updates on each sub-committee's status. The committee has compiled its evaluation of the 2010 conference and has met with WFA staff for debriefing. Tonya Hooks, Co-Chair of the 2010 Committee will chair the 2011 committee. Meetings will begin in July.

Girls of Promise – Northwest Arkansas Community College

Bentonville, AR

Saturday, May 1

Recruitment Goal: 100 girls

Registered: 80

Attended:

Volunteer Hours: TBD

Funds Raised: \$4,201.07

NWACC signed a GoP Campus Partnership agreement committing to serve as such indefinitely. Katherine A. Deck, Director of the Center for Business and Economic Research in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas was the keynote speaker. Other speakers included Dr. Becky Paneitz, President of Northwest Arkansas Community College; Libby Lawson, VP, Media and Public Relations, Tyson Foods, Inc.; and Natalie White, BA in Business Administration in Marketing from University of Central AR, and winner of "Survivor" Samoa. The conference was emceed by Terry Allen, Network Engineering, Business Analyst, Walmart.

The GoP-NWACC committee, chaired by Carolyn Lynch McKinley first met in January. The committee met regularly through called and telephonic meetings to coordinate the event. Makisa Sherry, co-chair for the 2010 conference will serve as chair for the 2011 year. Committee meetings will begin in July.

NOTE: \$8,971.00 was raised for the overall program (not site-specific)

Conclusion

As we wrap-up another successful year providing "Girls of Promise" conferences around the state, the enthusiasm and passion for "Girls of Promise" continues to grow. The Women's Foundation has trademarked the Girls of Promise program and developed a Girls of Promise "Tool Kit" as a way to expand the initiative into areas of the state where there is currently no programming – most notably the Southeast corner. The Tool Kit, for which WFA holds the copyright, was used by local committees for the first time during this 2010 conference season.

WFA has learned over the 10 years of providing this program that there is a growing network of Arkansas women eager to join with WFA in helping turn the tide on the shocking statistics on the state of Arkansas women and girls through efforts such as "Girls of Promise". WFA will work to grow the membership of all five local committees for the existing conferences and explore communities in which to offer a Girls of Promise program in 2011.

The Women's Foundation began an ambitious research project in June, 2010, which will run through the summer. A cadre of volunteers is conducting the research. Data from the past 10 years of Girls of Promise conferences is being entered into a database and past participants are being contacted to determine the impact of the program on their lives. This exciting data should be available in early Fall, 2010.

The State Girls of Promise committee comprised of board members and state community leaders and educators will continue to develop ways to better inform parents and girls of STEM opportunities available to them throughout the state outside of the GoP program. This committee will also lead the expansion planning for the program and seeking existing women's groups around the state to help conduct the conferences as a way to achieve WFA's goals of increasing the number of girls that remain in high school, graduate and pursue post-secondary education/training. The future is bright for the Women's Foundation of Arkansas' Girls of Promise program.