

## **Girls Inc. A look to the future by Carol Mullane**

**(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on December 7, 2010)**

Thanks for the positive feedback on the history of Girls Inc. of Oak Ridge. I have asked Executive Director Carol Mullane to share some of her thoughts about Girls Inc. and what she sees in the organization's future.

Later articles in this series will be delayed a few weeks, but I hope to bring you some personal observations of Roberta Sommerfeld, Joyce Morris and Anne Sides, all of whom were instrumental in the earliest efforts to form Girls Inc. Each of their perspectives is unique, yet they have seen the organization evolve and grow into its present state. I think you will enjoy reading their stories.

But first here is Carol's response to my request for her to look to the future:

"Ten years ago, Girls Incorporated® of Oak Ridge moved to its permanent address at 1798 Oak Ridge Turnpike. In 2004, an extension was added to the existing building, and the expanded space began to function as a new home for the educational programs the organization delivers.

"Girls Inc. Economic Literacy®, and Girls Inc. Operation Smart®—programs that focus on financial competency, math, science, and technology—are conducted every day in the Girls Inc. Center. Our Girls Inc. Sporting Chance® program is delivered in our outdoor space, and it continues to be one of our most successful programs through team sports.

"But, the Girls Inc. Center building is too small to host any indoor sports activities. We acquired a portion of the old National Guard Armory property to fulfill our dream of a campus that is a great environment for all girls.

"Picture programs that increase literacy skills and curricula that explore cultural heritage. Consider a place where girls and young women practice volleyball, play basketball, have fitness classes or have a night-owl camp where they learn about the planets, constellations and galaxies. Imagine a young girl walking into a room knowing that she would be learning valuable lessons for her future. [Wow, how's that for a vision of the future? – Ray]

"Our accommodations, in the past, have been limiting, but our vision has always been grand. Our increased campus space will be designed to benefit girls. More space equals more program specialization and more girls will be able to participate. The Armory property offers solutions, and the Armory building offers possibilities. We will need to do renovation work to make it more functional and are taking steps to make this happen.

"The Armory building needs to be reconfigured to construct a multi-purpose gymnasium where the girls' basketball program and envisioned volleyball program can occur. Other space will be remodeled to become a community meeting room, an Economic Literacy classroom, and specified spaces for specialized programs. Envision trained staff who will offer sports clinics, family-based workshops, exclusive-focused day camps and a place where the community can hold events. [Again, isn't that a great vision of the future? – Ray]

"We will also complete a needed second softball field allowing both softball practice and games to occur on Girls Inc. property. [Sports is an important element of the success of Girls Inc. – Ray]

"The existing Girls Inc. Center will be repurposed after the renovation project is finished in the old Armory building. The Center will house the administrative offices; a recently completed media and library room equipped with computers; an Operation SMART classroom; and a game room for the Sporting Chance program.

"View a portrait of a girl, whose compelling voice and perspective is woven into engaging programs. [Imagine a place where] persuasive advocacy for girls creates bright futures. Our campus will provide the

## Girls Inc. A look to the future by Carol Mullane

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on December 7, 2010)

opportunity for girls to play sports, to learn life skills, and to participate in after-school programming and summer camps. We want our possibilities to become realities for the many girls that we presently serve and will serve in the future.

"Girls Inc. is at the heart of girls' lives and at the forefront of the girls' rights movement with programs that are grounded in research and tested in the field. This research highlights underlying causes and effective solutions for girls' issues.

"Girls Inc. reaches out to girls whoever and wherever they are—on playgrounds and playing fields, in rural areas and urban centers, and in Canada and the United States. The compelling voices and perspectives of girls are woven throughout the organization's work.

"Our mission is to inspire girls to be **strong, smart and bold**.

"Girls are **strong** when we focus on programs that flex and strengthen the whole range of girls' muscles—from athletic skills to academic success while fostering self-respect and self determination.

"Girls are **smart** when we offer a curriculum that has solid research and evaluation as its foundation.

"Girls are **bold** when we encourage girls to advocate for themselves, and offer opportunities for girls to speak for themselves in public arenas.

"As a community, you share our successes. Please continue to work with us as we plan for our future. You are a part of our mission to inspire all girls to become **STRONG, SMART, and BOLD**.

We have gone from the origin of girls programs in the United States to the history of girls programs in Oak Ridge, followed their evolution and experienced the passion and progress over the years to now we see clearly their vision of the future. Thank you Carol!

It has been a good adventure and I look forward to the personal observations yet to come. Like Carol and Patti, they will excite you with their passion for helping girls.

I would like to especially thank Dot Jones for encouraging me to do this series and for all the hard work she put into organizing research materials. The additional personal experiences with Girls Inc. will be published early next year.

I have a special series I want to publish as we approach Christmas to recognize one of Oak Ridge's artists. So, the Girls Inc. series will be interrupted for a few weeks.

## Girls Inc. A look to the future by Carol Mullane

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on December 7, 2010)



Scott Fraker/Staff Carol Mullane, top center, executive director of Girls Incorporated, recently celebrated her five year anniversary with her staff and the girls.