



Inspiring all girls
to be strong,
smart, and bold



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NEWS

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#GIRLSTOO CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES ON ANNIVERSARY OF #METOO

New campaign will raise awareness about sexual harassment and violence facing girls

SANTA BARBARA, CA – Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara and Girls Inc. of Carpinteria announced the launch of a new national campaign called #GirlsToo today, on the one-year anniversary of the date when the #MeToo hashtag went viral and exploded into American culture. The campaign will focus on sexual harassment and assault in the lives of youth, particularly girls, with actions aimed at addressing the norms and stereotypes that fuel these behaviors.

Alarming, 7 in 10 girls are sexually harassed by the time they leave high school. A [recently released survey](#) of young girls between the ages of 14 and 19 found that 3 out of 4 girls feel unsafe at least once and while. The majority also said they hear boys making sexual comments at least several times a week.

“Sexual harassment and violence is an epidemic facing adults, but the problem starts at a much younger age,” said Barbara Ben-Horin, CEO of Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara. “The #GirlsToo campaign will focus on building a culture of respect for girls today and generations to come.”

Locally, [Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara](#) and [Girls Inc. of Carpinteria](#) are encouraging youth, adults and leaders to take the #GirlsToo pledge at girlstoo.girlsinc.org and be advocates for a more equitable society that values and promotes the dignity of girls and all young people. In addition, the campaign will also provide resources for girls, boys, parents and educators about how to discuss these issues and make changes in their lives and communities.

“The deeply entrenched norms about gender and identity first begin to take hold in early adolescence,” said Dr. Christia Spears Brown, a developmental psychologist and professor at the University of Kentucky. “These norms help to perpetuate the perception of women as sexualized objects and have harmful and lasting impacts for girls in particular.”

From an early age, young people receive limiting and harmful messages about how girls and boys should behave and be treated, which creates an imbalance of power that disproportionately affects girls of color, LGBTQ+ youth, girls with disabilities and girls from low-income communities. These norms and stereotypes follow them into adulthood and perpetuate attitudes and behaviors that can harm young girls and women alike.

Girls Inc. believes we must unite to shift deeply entrenched norms, stop the sexual harassment and violence that girls face, and create a healthier, safer culture for all young people. Changing norms around sexual violence is possible, but it requires participation and commitment from everyone. There are concrete, tangible actions individuals can take to make a positive difference and create a culture of respect for girls and all young people, such as:

- **Reflect** - Reflect on your own biases and challenge gender stereotypes
- **Educate** - Educate youth about healthy relationships and consent
- **Support** - Support and believe survivors who come forward
- **Promote** - Promote policies and practices that foster a safe school climate
- **Encourage** - Encourage youth leadership and involvement in change
- **Call Out** - Call out words and actions that demean women and girls
- **Take Action** - Be an “upstander” and intervene to prevent harm

Girls Inc., along with its powerful network of girls and partners, will champion this change in the communities they serve and put forward solutions to prevent sexual harassment and violence and promote respect for girls.

“The best way to foster a community that’s rooted in respect is by making it a daily practice in our homes, schools and neighborhoods,” said Victoria Juarez, executive director of Girls Inc. of Carpinteria. “When we treat each other with respect and teach our youth to do the same, we can achieve the type of culture change that significantly improves the lives of young people today and tomorrow.”

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About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through direct service and advocacy. Our comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. These positive outcomes are achieved through three core elements: *people* - trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships; *environment* - girls-only, physically and emotionally safe, where there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations, and mutual respect; and *programming* - research-based, hands-on and minds-on, age-appropriate, meeting the needs of today’s girls. Informed by girls and their families, we also advocate for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls. Each year, [Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara](#) and [Girls Inc. of Carpinteria](#) collectively serve more than 2,000 girls through out-of-school learning programs (after-school and summer camp), teen, outreach, and gymnastics programs.