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In Neighborhoods



BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

The Girl Inspired Conference Gives Young Women in Sacramento Advice on Success

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Days before she graduated from Pacific Elementary School in South Sacramento, 11-year-old Amyah Davis had a chance to hear successful women speak on important topics such as how to excel in life.

Among that advice: Follow her dreams, never give up, be herself and not forget her community.

The sixth grader also heard messages about the beauty of her character and that she has the power to change the world.

These words of encouragement came from the Girl Inspired Conference sponsored by the Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) with the support of The California Endowment.

The day-long event, held at American River College, aims to promote female empowerment and sisterhood among girls of all ethnicities in grades six to eight in the SCUSD.

This year, the girls attended classroom workshops dealing with leadership development, college and career readiness, social justice and healthy lifestyles. Most of the workshops were conducted by nonprofit partners of the district.

“Our hope is that the girls walk away with something” that will help them reach their full potential, said conference co-founder Aliya Holmes, coordinator and liaison for SCUSD’s Foster Youth Services and Targeted Prevention/Intervention programs.

The conference was inspired by the Boys & Men of Color (BMOC) Summit, an annual event that in recent years has been held at Sacramento State University, to steer Sac City Unified boys toward excellence, and away from drugs, gangs and arrests.

“After BMOC began (in 2009), a group of women made up of community partners and SCUSD staff talked about what we could do for our young girls,” Holmes said. “The boys at BMOC have sisters, and the same things that our young boys are experiencing, their sisters are experiencing, too.”

“THE SAME THINGS THAT OUR YOUNG BOYS ARE EXPERIENCING, THEIR SISTERS ARE EXPERIENCING, TOO.”

Aliya Holmes
Girl Inspired Conference Co-Founder

The first Girl Inspired Conference, held in 2010, drew 50 middle school girls and it has steadily grown each year.

During lunch, the attendees heard inspirational songs performed by solo artist



Amyah Davis (left) attended the Girl Inspired Conference days before she completed sixth grade at Pacific Elementary. “It was fun,” she said of the summit co-founded by Aliya Holmes (right). Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Gabrielle Reid, who sang the self-composed tunes while playing guitar.

Reid, 18, also known as VirgoGabrielle, told her audience: “In middle school, I was not popular. But my individuality has brought me to a point where I can express myself through my music. So, as you go through school, be yourself!”

Amyah, a member of Pacific Elementary’s Student Council, applauded.

“The conference was a lot of fun,” Amyah said, adding she learned lessons that will help her, starting with her transition to Fern Bacon Middle School next fall.

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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For more info about the Girl Inspired Conference or ways you can get involved, contact:
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