

Report for Live Your Dream 7th Grade Girls' Conference 2015
Cecilia Dino-Durkin

59 girls attended

Volunteers

- AAUW Members – 16
- Vassar students – 3
- Marist students - 6
- DCC students - 6
- Non-members/Community - 7

Workshops

1. Fashion Forward
2. Yoga
3. Vassar/Haiti Project/Jewelry Making to Make a Difference
4. Poet Gold: Dream Spoken Word
5. Marist LEAP: Team Building Exercise
6. Debbie St. Onge: Engineering Career/STEAM exercise
7. Grace Smith House: My Campaign
8. Planned Parenthood: My Story

Activity and Activism Tables

1. Decorate Picture Frames for Children's Home of Poughkeepsie
2. Gift Wrap Books – Lead Into Reading
3. Decorate Food Donation Boxes for Family Services
4. Make Cards and Ornaments for Adopt a Soldier
5. Feminist Photo Booth – Girl Up
6. Puberty Packs – Planned Parenthood
7. Who I am Bracelets – Girl Scout Troop
8. Heartfelt Mice – Girl Scout Troop
9. Make a Blanket for a girl out of surgery - Curvy Girls
10. Name the Painting – Vassar Haiti Project

Explanation for Expenses –

Over the years, we've kept the number of people we feed during lunch to under the actual number of people who are present on that day. 1.) because we never really know who will come and so we never know the actual numbers until the day of. 2.) we want to keep costs down, so we under-estimate largely because the caterers were very generous and gave us more food than the girls could eat. But the caterers had noticed that we were under-ordering, so we gave them a more accurate count this year. The 80 person count is still less than the actual number of people who ate lunch. Because we invite the workshop leaders and the girl talk leaders to eat with the girls, thus providing another way for the girls to make a connection and to be inspired, I think it's important to include some of the volunteers in the lunch count.

Craft Supplies – For the past three years, we’ve enjoyed the donated supplies of craft materials to the conference, but that generosity cannot always be relied on, and this year there was less craft making supplies donated and more that needed to be bought. We had to replenish the markers, paper, and stickers. We had not bought much of these items in the past two years, and there will not be a need to buy most of them next year.

Our biggest difficulty and time consumption is getting the girls to register for the conference. It is imperative that we have a presence at the parents’ nights, that we gain exposure to the parents through the PTA and this year we also tried marketing the conference at the Galleria. I had banners made for these on-site appearances and to use during the conference. This is a one-time cost.

Because even the commitment by the school staff is not enough of a guarantee that students will sign up, we tried radio ads and facebook promotions. I had a school administrator contact me after hearing a radio ad and a parent. Our Facebook promotion yielded more Likes of our page and also two girls to our conference. This was necessary, I felt, because we only had 18 girls signed up at the time of the deadline. Since we extended the deadline, we needed to inform the community of the new date and that could only be done through radio and Facebook, both at very reasonable costs of \$80/radio ad that was matched by the radio station and for \$40 for FB that reached 5,000 viewers.

This year, we also had an intern who was devoted to creating a YouTube video that included girls who attended from Arlington and girls who were going to attend from Poughkeepsie. This gave those schools an incentive to show the video and to heavily promote the conference. The video was also shown during the marketing during various Open Houses and is a strong web presence. In keeping with AAUW’s mission of promoting the education of women and girls, we paid the intern \$200 for her efforts in making the video, collecting contact info for the area schools, sending the video and marketing materials to the schools, writing articles about the event and volunteering during the event. Furthering the career of a recent grad is a wonderful bonus community outreach endeavor that I think is well worth the \$200.

I also paid \$103 for the use of the film, *Girl Rising*. The DVD is available to show our members and to be used in workshops in the future. The members who saw it during a Diversity meeting were informed, inspired and moved. I hope more members will get a chance to see it.

We also incorporated not only hands-on workshops but also activity/activism tables. Girls were able to learn more about an organization and then do some sort of community service, like make a card for a soldier, make a picture frame for a child at the Children’s Home of Poughkeepsie, decorate a food donation box for Family Services. These additional activities needed craft supplies, which are an added expense for the Conference.

Unfortunately, the crafts are consumable and so they do need to be replenished. But I the

majority of the expenses that we incurred this year are one-time expenditures that will be used for years to come.

My evaluation: I was very happy with the outcome of this conference. The girls were engaged from the beginning and from my observation, participated with enthusiasm throughout the day.

During Sara Nowlin's welcome, we showed a short clip with statistics about girls around the world. It mentioned that some girls were being married at a young age and one girl mentioned this statistic in her survey. Two girls mentioned that the movie made them uncomfortable. I see that as a good thing. Even after a day full of information and other activities, there were girls who were still thinking about the message in the Girl Rising film. That means it made an impact. It resonated and it stayed with them.

I not only saw leadership in the 7th graders but also the college-aged workshop leaders and the volunteers. Our conference has the unique ability to not only reach junior high school students but also the young women in our community that could potentially be AAUW members.

And for our members, we have a meaningful and worthwhile activity that resonates with so many of us who wish to belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women and girls have a fair chance.

Some things for AAUW to consider:

We needed members to volunteer to work directly with a school in order for us to get girls to sign up. Since many schools have the same night for Open House, there needs to be more members that can cover those evenings in order for us to reach as many parents.

Very few members sign up to help with the planning. The majority of the volunteers can only be present on the day of the event. Many more hands/minds/ talents are needed in the planning, preparation and the marketing of the event.

After 9 years, the conference still has a hard time attracting the 100 girls we have always wanted. There is a lot of time and effort, as well as expense that goes into the conferences. Does the board think this is worth pursuing? Marcine had given me all of the information available to help in making the conference happen. Over the past 4 years, she has been there to lend a hand. I hope to do the same for the next LYD committee chair. Is there someone else who would like to take this important and worthwhile project on? If it's helpful, someone interested in taking over can shadow me for next year's conference should you want to continue the program, or they can make the conference their own.

I know that Marcine has a very special place in her heart for LYD as do I. I would love to see it continue.

I just finished doing all the checks I have for the Girls Conference. Total expense so far comes to 2,270.89. Contributions and fees totaled 1631. My understanding is that there is \$2,000 that has been fundraised and set aside for LYD. So, wouldn't the total amount that can be used for the Conference be \$3631? That was my understanding and that's what I thought I could spend in which case, I'm under budget by a great deal! No? ☺

I'm still awaiting reports from various members who had volunteered. I'll let you know what they have to say. All-in-all, it was a wonderful day that the majority of girls would like to do again in the form of a reunion!

Note: After this report was written it was decided that the conference would be suspended for 2015.

From Cecelia Dinio-Durkin, June 1, 2015:

Dear Poughkeepsie AAUW Board,

Attached please find school contacts and last year's booklet listing our volunteers and community partners. There is also a sample letter that we've distributed to schools asking for their support. I have gotten several emails about the upcoming girls' conference. I will compile a list of contact info of interested people for future youth-oriented events.

I wasn't able to hold a meeting since there wasn't a day where a consensus could get together, so instead, I met with various LYD volunteers.

After much discussion, with DCC unable to give us the first Sat. in November, the committee decided not to hold the conference this year. There has never been a good time in the Spring to hold even a reunion with so many extra-curricular activities going on, so postponing it would not garner a good turn out.

Briefly, there has been a decline in membership support, the student participation is very difficult to maintain, and several of our key workshops would need to be replaced. It is my opinion that there be a re-working of the Girls' Conference going forward.

As I've said before, I will no longer be able to Chair this activity. I have tried to find someone else to take over, but couldn't find anyone within our membership.

I wanted to thank the Board for entrusting me with this task. Of course, I didn't do it alone and the key AAUW members who originated the program from the start did a wonderful job guiding the conference outcomes each year.

There are wonderful resources that we've accumulated over the years including partnerships with Planned Parenthood, Grace Smith House, etc...and I'm sure they would

be available for other youth empowerment programs. And we have plenty of arts and crafts supplies on-hand for AAUW projects/programs.

Thanks to the many members who devoted their time and efforts in making this happen for the past 8 years! The school districts seem to finally be on board and I'm sure they will welcome future collaborations. It was an honor and a privilege to see our organization come together to fulfill our mission and to affect the lives of so many girls in our area.

Marcine has graciously offered to help me inventory the supplies and I'd love to turn them over to the Board next month.