



MY NEW YORK STORY

BY PAMELA MARALDO, CEO OF GIRLS INC. NEW YORK CITY

As an advocate for women, my life's work has taken me down roads that have always led to championing women's issues. I came to Girls Inc. of New York City for the same reasons: because I wanted to help give girls, especially girls living in poverty, a strong foundation, strategies that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

I joined Girls Inc. 13 years ago, first as a consultant, serving as interim Executive Director, and then as Chief Executive Officer five years ago. I see Girls Inc. of New York City as part of the solution in society. We are helping to bridge the gender, racial, and economic divides that are palpable in today's world, and to prepare the young girls in our organization with the skills to become leaders.

My vision for the organization is to have a strong presence and brand recognition in schools throughout the city while preparing girls for leadership, creating a world where our daughters are welcome as much as our sons.

It's also my job to think about where our most considerable growth is in the future. I'm working with our board members and partners to create new cutting-edge initiatives that address major societal problems like the mental health crisis among girls in New York City and the highest suicide particularly among black girls. We're also launching new initiatives that will give the girls we serve skills for the 21st century, in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), Financial literacy, and knowledge in other areas they don't usually get in school.

THE MISSION

Girls Inc. of New York City is a non-profit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through direct service and advocacy. Through strategic partnerships with schools in all five boroughs, we find those that align with our vision and goals and work together to deliver our programs. Currently, Girls Inc. is in 60 high schools throughout the city, and this year we will serve 10,000 girls.

Many of our girls have challenging circumstances; they're from the most depressed and impoverished communities of New York City. Our job is to make sure we offer opportunities that provide a strong foundation and skills that will give them the tools for a brighter future.



Pamela Maraldo

OUR PROGRAMS

What sets our programs apart is that they're research-based, and they're grounded in experiential learning. For instance, not many girls know how to invest in the stock market. To change that, one of our programs allowed girls to invest in the market. Within a year, they had a 54 percent rate of return. Not only did they learn how to invest, but they were also able to keep their savings for college, an experience they'll never forget.

Two places where I see our most significant growth are our teen leadership circles, where we train girls to become peer leaders who deliver our programs, and cutting-edge, digitized, interactive programs over the Internet.

I'm incredibly proud of Generation Giga Girls (G3): The Moody's Data Analytic Program, which we created with the help of Moody's Corporation and is now a national program available in thirteen cities. It is designed to teach girls about big data, how companies use it, how it's used in marketing, as well as to solve research problems. It focuses on how big data is changing our world. Ultimately, it's providing the skills needed to enter STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) field.



ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH

This year we are focusing heavily on mental health. There has been a rapid rise of depression in teen girls as well as suicides, which has become the second leading cause of death amongst teens. Physical health is mandated in schools across the country, why not mental health? Mental health should be just as important. Proceeds from this year's virtual gala will go towards our Mind Body Matters program; it provides girls with the tools they need to understand how to deal with the stressors in their lives.

The first four modules are currently being piloted in schools in Brooklyn, East Harlem, and the South Bronx. The goal is to deliver the program to not only the schools that participate in Girls Inc. but to distribute it throughout the entire NYC public school system.

What's unique about these programs is girls' capability to interact in an online community and connect with other members of their class for support, in whatever form they need.

A VIRTUAL GALA

For the past ten years, Girls Inc. of New York City has hosted an annual gala where we celebrate corporate and female leadership along with the accomplishments of our members and our alumni. This year we will be holding a virtual gala on May 14th instead of our usual Cipriani celebration. But our Virtual Gala will be none the less exciting in its purpose: honoring the exceptional work of the girls in our programs from underprivileged communities all over the city.

Participants will have the opportunity to see firsthand the shared stories of the girls in our programs and alumni. We've invited Caroline Rhea to host the Gala as usual, with key messages about the financial crisis as well as how to maintain your mental well-being during this time of crisis. This exciting virtual event will highlight the difference Girls Inc. of New York City is making in their lives, preparing these young women as future leaders.

For more information on Girls Inc. New York City, visit girlsincnyc.org.

