

ONGOING

University of Michigan School of Social Work

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GIRLS GROUP CELEBRATING 11 YEARS

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
ORGANIZING COURSE:
Human Trafficking/Prostitution

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GIRLS GROUP CELEBRATING 11 YEARS



The Girls Group, a program to develop self-sufficiency in young women in grades 6 through 12 who have the potential to become first-generation college students, celebrated its 11th anniversary with a brunch for more than 300 supporters on November 15.

Girls Group provides year-round programming and mentoring to develop character, leadership, self-confidence and social consciousness, including the desire and ability to mentor others. Since its inception, 100 percent of Girls Group high school students have graduated and gone on to attend college.

Program Director Alissa Little, MSW '11, had her field placement with Girls Group under the direction of Executive Director Sue Schooner in 2010-11. She felt such a strong commitment to the Girls Group mission and joined the staff immediately after graduation in 2011.

"Girls Group started 11 years ago with 6 girls, and today we have 250 girls with programming in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti schools," Little said. "Currently we have interns from the University of Michigan School of Social Work, Eastern Michigan University and Wayne State University."

During the anniversary celebration a panel discussion included young women who are participating in the program, a graduate of the program, a high school principal and a parent. Each panelist shared their experiences with attendees.

Clague Middle School Principal Che Carter has had the program in his school since Fall 2013. "The Girls Group participants show an improvement in academics and behavior, and as a result they have an eye on the future," Carter said. "We have a limit to how many girls we can take into the program, and we hope it continues to grow because we love the success that comes with it."

The program includes individual mentoring and counseling including homework and organization support for high school and middle school girls. Each month they participate in community service projects, art and cultural activities and youth-led leadership council. Girls Group also provides mother-daughter workshops and college prep assistance.



Alexia Burton is a graduate of the Girls Group program, completed her undergraduate degree at Tuskegee University and is currently working on her MSW with the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

"The Girls Group was an amazing support system for me and gave me the confidence to express myself," Burton said. "The world is yours if you envision it!"

Burton met with First Lady Michelle Obama not once, but twice, during Girls Group opportunities.

"Girls Group helped me become the woman I am today," Burton said. "They gave me confidence and helped me realize that I have limitless potential."

Alecia Girma, a Girls Group graduate who is now attending Washtenaw Community College, said, "I wouldn't be here today without the Girls Group... they held my hand and gave me the support I needed during a very tough time in my life."

Azira Azzizudin-McCloud, a senior at Skyline High School, said her best memory of Girls Group is her college tour of historically black universities.

"I wouldn't have been able to do a college tour without the help of Girls Group," Azzizudin-McCloud said.

"They taught me how to follow my passion." **M**



For more information about Girls Group and the year-round programming and mentoring they provide, please go to

GIRLSGROUP.ORG

