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Teenage Girls Give Grants to Girl-Created Programs

First and Only Program of its Kind Leads National Trend towards Innovative 'Girls Only' Programming

CHICAGO—Teenage girls who have become grant-makers will announce grants to fund activities that are designed for girls, by girls. The program, Sisters Empowering Sisters (SES), was established to give girls the opportunity to finance their own ideas about how to help other girls.

In the only program of its kind in the nation, seven 14-18 year-old young women spend a year participating in trainings, reviewing proposals and conducting interviews with their peers from around the Chicagoland area. On April 7th this diverse group of girls will announce grants totaling more than \$10,000 for a variety of girl-oriented activities, ranging from a group of girls making a documentary film about the issues girls face to girls rallying for violence prevention.

"Sisters Empowering Sisters empowers girls and young women to become involved in their communities," said Karen Zeitlin, executive director of Girl's Best Friend Foundation. "Girls know best what programs work for other girls."

SES includes girls from various cultures and neighborhoods with different experiences and perspectives. The SES program gives girls the power and authority to make decisions about their own lives and an opportunity to make friends with girls unlike themselves. One grant-maker, Alice Mathias, 15, said, "GBF really makes you proud of women in general. When you see what girls are doing in their communities, it's truly inspiring."

SES members recognize that girls need to know that what they are doing is important, that they are important, and that their programs and leadership roles are worthy of attention.

"I think the programs are like dominoes," said Kristina Reis, a 17-year-old high school junior, "As grant-makers, we start the process with a push by choosing programs to give money to, then those girls go out and help other girls in their communities and so on."

SES was created by Girl's Best Friend Foundation, which gives more than \$450,000 annually to girls' programming in Illinois. SES reflects the growing trends of supporting and promoting programming that focuses specifically on the unique needs of girls, and the involvement of youth in grant-making.

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