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yw magazine

Shines™

FALL 2015 • FREE

celebrating the aspirations and accomplishments of women

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Women of Achievement
across industry, culture and public service

Cheryl Albright
Carlene Casciano-McCann
Deborah DeBare
Carmen Diaz-Jusino
Aleatha M. Dickerson
Rebeca Filomeno-Nason
Laurie Ludovici
Catalina Martinez
Sabina Matos
Edna O'Neill Mattson
Kathryn Quina
Kim A. Ripoli
Charon L. Rose

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

Organization of the Year
Rebuilding Together Providence and
volunteers from Honeywell Hometown Solutions

published by YWCA Rhode Island • volume 11, number 1 • www.sheshines.org

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celebrating the aspirations and
accomplishments of women

published by YWCA Rhode Island



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YW She Shines

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Hi Mollie!

photo by Deborah L. Perry

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YWCA Rhode Island is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

YWCA highlights achievement

Congratulations to the 2015 Women of Achievement award winners. All of these women have amazing stories and are contributing to Rhode Island in ways that will be felt for generations to come.

Nominated by their peers, winners include a health worker, political leaders, educators, police and military officials, non-profit leaders, government officials, and a performer.

We asked each of these women the questions “How do we build resilient girls?” and “How do you build resiliency in your own life?” Many mentioned the need to provide a strong foundation for girls when they are young by consciously focusing on building self-esteem in all of our interactions, knowing that in doing so we can help them realize their full potential.

Their advice is wise and should be taken to heart. And as award winner Rebeca Filomeno-Nason says, “. . . it is always easier to rise when you have a helping hand to pull you up.”

Congratulations to Cheryl Albright, Carlene Casciano-McCann, Deborah DeBare, Carmen Diaz-Jusino, Aleatha M. Dickerson, Rebeca Filomeno-Nason, Laurie Ludovici, Catalina Martinez, Sabina Matos, Edna O'Neill Mattson, Kathryn Quina, Kim A. Ripoli, Charon L. Rose and Jane C. Eskelund. ✨

Very truly yours,

Deborah

Deborah L. Perry, President/Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Rhode Island

trust it

how to:

contribute. *YW She Shines* welcomes letters to the editor, articles, poetry, stories, graphics, photos and calendar events. Contact us if you have an inspiring story to tell or have a suggestion of someone to be featured. Only original contributions will be considered and may be edited due to space limitations. Include contact information: name, e-mail, address and phone number. Images provided electronically must be high-resolution.

submit cover art. The cover is reserved as a gallery of art in keeping with the *YW She Shines* theme. For consideration, send in a photo by e-mail attachment or mail. This is a wonderful opportunity for local artists to show their work. A biography is published in conjunction with the “Artist Canvas” section of *YW She Shines*.

advertise. Visit sheshines.org to view the advertising media kit. *YW She Shines* reserves the right to refuse to sell space for any advertisement the staff deems inappropriate for the publication.

receive the magazine. *YW She Shines* is a free publication mailed to members and friends of YWCA Rhode Island. To be added to the mailing list, send in the subscription form - available online at sheshines.org. The magazine is also available at YWCA Rhode Island and at various special events.

contents. share it

3 awards presentation

11th Annual Awards Ceremony

9 women of achievement

Aleatha M. Dickerson
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Edna O'Neill Mattson
Rebeca Filomeno-Nason
Catalina Martinez
Laurie Ludovici
Kathryn Quina
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Charon L. Rose
Carlene Casciano-McCann
Carmen Diaz-Jusino
Deborah DeBare
Cheryl Albright

22 organization of the year

Rebuilding Together Providence and volunteers
from Honeywell Hometown Solutions

23 fantastic girtastic code company™

Special Insert: YWCA Rhode Island



cover art
**to the sun
and back**

Kathleen A. Swann was inspired to paint a sunflower pastel, following a family outing. Upon first glance, all the sunflowers appeared to be the same. She then realized that, depending how and where she looked, each flower took on its own prominence. Perspective changed both her perception and appreciation of the garden's entirety and each flower's individuality. ✨



Kathleen A. Swann holds a PhD in education with extensive experience in teaching, literacy, and nonprofit management. A late-blooming artist, she began drawing several years ago by sketching in a field journal. Swann has studied at RISD, New York Botanical Gardens, and local art associations. Her work is inspired by nature and ranges from scientifically accurate illustrations to creative pieces in different media. Her latest project is OOWOW™, a children's game that develops reading skills. Swann builds resiliency through regular yoga and meditation practice, combined with strong, supportive relationships. She firmly believes that, while change is a part of life, we all live to learn and can embrace opportunities for self-discovery. She can be contacted at kswann@oowow.com.

Images courtesy of Kathleen A. Swann

honoring women of achievement

YWCA Rhode Island recognizes
women in industry, culture and public service

*event underwriters and attendees
thank you!*



Thirteen women and an organization were recognized for their accomplishments promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity at the 11th Annual Women of Achievement Awards Luncheon, held September 29 at Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln. Deb Ruggiero served as the event emcee.

Congratulations to the 2015 honorees. YWCA Rhode Island appreciates the underwriters and attendees celebrating the following Women of Achievement and Organization of the Year: Aleatha M. Dickerson, Sabina Matos, Edna O'Neill Mattson, Rebeca Filomeno-Nason, Catalina Martinez, Laurie Ludovici, Kathryn Quina, Kim A. Ripoli, Charon L. Rose, Carlene Casciano-McCann, Carmen Diaz-Jusino, Deborah DeBare, Cheryl Albright, Rebuilding Together Providence, and volunteers from Honeywell Hometown Solutions.

Women of Achievement Awards are recognized nationally. They bring attention to the accomplishments of women in industry, culture and public service in local communities. For additional information, visit www.womenofachievementRI.org.

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"YWCA is pleased to host this celebration for the eleventh year in a row to recognize the accomplishments of women across industry, culture and public service," says Deborah L. Perry, president/chief executive officer of YWCA Rhode Island. "YWCA recognizes these extraordinary women for their amazing achievements, they are truly making a difference in Rhode Island."

Editor's Note: The honorees are highlighted on pages 9 through 22.

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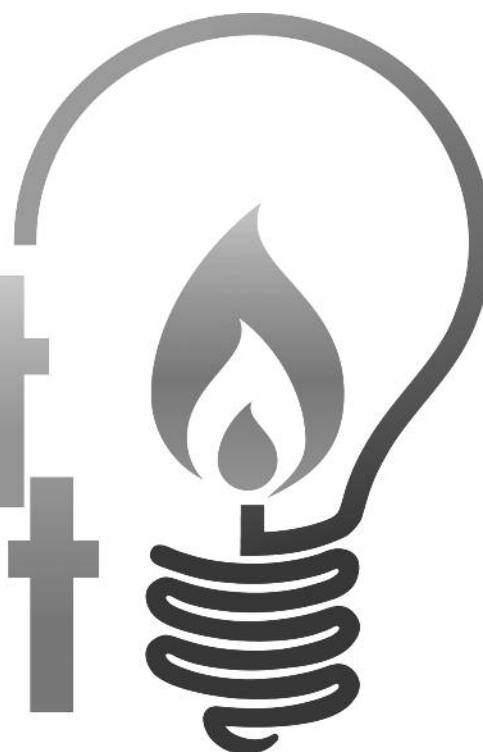
 
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New mom Christina with baby Lincoln

L to R: Laurie Curry, MD, Deborah Hayden, MD, Danika Wynn, CNM (Certified Nurse Midwife)

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to our esteemed colleague,
Council President Pro Tempore Sabina Matos,
and to each of the honorees,
for being recognized as a 2015 YWCA
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and the Providence City Council

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**Congratulations to the Honorees of the
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Rebuilding Together congratulates Jane Eskelund, the dedicated staff and volunteers at Rebuilding Together Providence, and Honeywell Hometown Solutions on receiving the prestigious Organization of the Year award from YWCA Rhode Island! Your work is a testament to Rebuilding Together's vision of providing a safe and healthy home for every person.

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Congratulations Aleatha Dickerson!
2015 Women of Achievement Award

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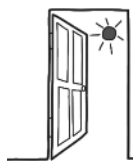


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Aleatha M. Dickerson has served as project manager for the Rhode Island Senior Medicare Patrol Project at the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs. She is also program manager for the Rhode Island Title IIIIC Congregate and Home Delivered Nutrition Programs; and program manager for the Rhode Island Title IIID Health Promotion and Medication Management program grants. In addition, she serves as project director for the Commodities Supplemental Food Program. Dickerson previously worked for the Rhode Island Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired Independent Living Program as a rehabilitation teacher. She earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Rhode Island and has a Bachelor of Science degree from Rhode Island College.

photo by Agapao Productions

Aleatha M. Dickerson

How do we build resilient girls? How do you build resiliency in your own life?

Take time to be thankful for the present, this gift of life. Enjoy the simple things, but don't be afraid to work and play hard. Learn from past experiences, the good as well as the struggles. Explore options as you prepare to move into the future. Look to the positive and accept those things we do not have control of. Build on your abilities, rather than focusing on what you are unable to do. Have patience. Finally, always respect yourself and treat others with respect and dignity.

Throughout my life I have had to overcome numerous bridges as I worked to achieve my goals. I guess you might call me stubborn, but when faced with a challenge, I tend to dig my heels in and become determined to find a way to move forward. I hope I might be a positive role model for my daughter, granddaughters, nieces and the other girls and women in my life to encourage them that they may overcome the struggles.

In 1987, I had a severe illness which altered my life in ways I could never have imagined. As a wife, mother of four young children, and a pathology technologist working full-time, I was suddenly faced with a very serious illness which left me in pain, physically weak and visually impaired.

However, during the initial two-month hospital stay, I focused on my faith in God to give me courage and strength. I made a conscious decision to accept the situation, but was determined to move forward to do all I could to live a full life regardless of the new limitations.

With the support of my husband Keith, my mother, and other family members, I set out on this new path. I reflected on past experiences to learn how to accomplish the simplest daily tasks. Everyday things, such as grooming, having a meal and other daily activities had become challenging. I had to find patience with myself and also with some people try-

ing to offer what I perceived as too much help. After many surgeries over several years which made me pain free, and a long rehabilitation, I learned how to get around independently to meet my daily needs and to take care of my young family.

By volunteering in the community and learning to use a computer with special software, I improved my skills and knowledge. I wanted to resume having a career. After several years, I dared to enroll in a graduate program and enjoyed earning a Master's of Science degree.

One important lesson I have learned is that although I like to think of myself as a woman with a very independent spirit, I realize there are times when we all need to accept support and assistance from others. Support might come from family or friends, but there are also service providers and resources available along the way to help us through this interesting adventure we call life. ✨

Essay originally appeared in 2012 YW She Shines™ magazine, to coincide with the 4th annual Women Holding Office Celebration when Sabina Matos was honored as a 'Rising Political Star'. At her request, it is reprinted for this Fall 2015 edition.



Providence Council President Pro Tempore Sabina Matos was first elected Councilperson for Ward 15 in 2010, and was re-elected in 2014. She represents Olneyville, as well as parts of Silver Lake and Valley neighborhoods. She is the first Latina Council President Pro Tempore in Providence's history. Matos graduated from Rhode Island College with a BA in Communications and Public Relations. She is a graduate of the Latina Leadership Institute and Leadership For a Future. Matos is a past President of Rhode Island Latino Political Action Committee. She has served on many boards including Olneyville Housing Corporation, United Way of Rhode Island and ECAS Theater.

photo by Agapao Productions

Sabina Matos

Why do we need more women holding public office?

It is important that women are elected to public office because women bring a different and important perspective when dealing with issues. Often time women bring a fresh voice to the table. Furthermore, we tend to tackle issues by approaching things from a different angle. Our decision making process tends to be more focus on the well being of the community as a whole; it is almost as if the mothering instinct is always on.

At this time, for a woman to serve effectively in elected office can be challenging; many times we have to work twice as hard as our males' colleagues to call attention to an issue of importance. If we had more females voices in elected office this would be different. More women involved in the political process will translate eventually into more women in leadership positions and at the decision making tables.

Regardless of the challenges, women learn to work with what we have, and yes, work harder if need be in order to find the way to ensure that our voices are heard and our points of view are respected. There are always those whom would prefer to take for granted our role; but instead, their actions really make us stronger.

Many times, those actions are the catalysts that transform us into becoming more assertive in our discourse in order to defend our point of view.

As you can see, there are several issues involving women in public office. First, we definitely need more women in elected office and we need to continue to encourage other women to run for office. Secondly, we also need to ensure that once in elected office, women feel empowered and have a good understanding of their authority. ❖❖❖



Edna O'Neill Mattson has a long history of volunteerism such as with The Navy Relief Society and American Red Cross. She has served on the North Kingstown Personnel Board, North Kingstown Democratic Town Committee – 1st Woman Chair, and helped organize the Rhode Island Democratic City and Town Chair Associations. She served on the Rhode Island Boy Scouts Board and participated as a den mother. At CCRI, she is active with both the CCRI Foundation and Student Leadership Committee. Mattson is still active on a number of committees both at CCRI as well as politically. Presently she serves as a Rhode Island Democratic National Committee Women.

photo by Agapao Productions

Edna O'Neill Mattson

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

The old saying “time flies when you are having fun”—does indeed apply to our lives.

Though not all has been fun—it has all been a “learning experience”—the journey has been long—but then at 79 you’d expect that.

As to my path—I had a Mother who was the best of examples both her love and interaction with our family as well as her fine example of giving back to the community and those in need—always there when someone needed a hand. The ability to cope with situations was learned early on from her—she was my mentor—and started me on my political venture—stuffing envelopes for John F. Kennedy when he first ran for congress-- another mentor and fine lady Eleanor Slater, later in my life-- encouraged me to become involved locally in

North Kingstown, then with the state Democratic party and Democratic National committee--and both shared the same birthday though 5 years apart—each committed to family and politically savvy.

Coping skills are critical in the development and self assurance of all genders and come to us often by example. We each must take pride and respect for ourselves first—in order to pass this along to our sisters.

I have found great satisfaction in volunteering in many areas—as a youngster-- a Girl Scout—later as a Gray Lady with American Red Cross—then as a coordinator of volunteer programs at several military hospitals, case work for the Navy Relief Society—a Mission One liaison for the 143rd

Tactical Air Group for many years and as an executive board member of the RIESGR with another fine group of individuals concerned with the well-being of our military personnel as well as their families. The Military Order of Foreign Wars executive board—providing awards to outstanding student achievers. My many years with CCRI and Foundation and the interaction with Student Government—providing scholarships and seeing young people thrive as they move forth with confidence in the choices that they are making is most rewarding to me.

If each day we can each learn something of value to benefit our world in a positive manner—how much better we all will be. God bless America and our world. CARPE DIEM. ✨



Rebeca Filomeno-Nason is a high school guidance counselor for Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, a public charter school that educates pregnant, parenting and underserved adolescents. Like many of her students, Filomeno-Nason was a teen mom. She balanced motherhood, work as a preschool teacher, and study at Community College of Rhode Island. She went on to Lesley University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Human Development. Filomeno-Nason then began working as an educator at The Learning Community Charter School. Concentrating on her life-long dream of becoming a high school guidance counselor, she went on to pursue a master's degree in School Counseling from Seton Hall University. Currently, Filomeno-Nason is seeking her administrator certification through the Principal in Residency Network.

photo by Agapao Productions

Rebeca Filomeno-Nason

How do we build resilient girls?

How do you build resiliency in your own life?

When I hear the word resiliency I begin to picture particular faces of children and adolescents who have entered my life throughout my short thirteen years as an educator and school counselor. The challenging experiences of my students and their families have included illness, separation, loss, poverty, homelessness, depression, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy and parenting. Students and their families have shared numerous examples of their pain and turmoil. I have listened with humility and admiration for their strength and resiliency.

As I reflect on the characteristics of resiliency, common qualities come to mind. Resilient individuals are often hopeful, optimistic, and persistent. They acknowledge failures as opportunities for self-reflection, learning and growth. Resilient individuals are able to identify where they are, where they want to

be, and then take the necessary steps to get there. Yet, the most admirable quality is their ability to seek out support and guidance when they need it the most. I believe it is through supportive and caring relationships with mentors, that girls and young women continue to build resiliency. Through these meaningful relationships a sense of identity and self-worth is fostered.

I was a pregnant and parenting teen myself. I continuously experienced obstacles. Paths of opportunity that were once part of my plan were no longer in place once I became pregnant. I had to find my own way, and I did, but I was not alone. I have been most fortunate to have many mentors along this journey. For each and every path I decided to take, a caring woman was there to walk right along side me. She allowed me to share my thoughts, feelings, fears and goals. She helped me recognize my strengths and

my weaknesses. She shared with me her ability to be resilient, and the importance of integrity. I have only reached this point in my life because of these amazing women.

Now it is my turn to impart the support they have gifted me. I am a school guidance counselor for underserved, pregnant and parenting teens. While my students and I share similar experiences, our lives are different. Every journey is unique. The fact that I, too, was a teen mom does not automatically make me an effective school counselor. What defines me more as an educator, counselor and mentor is my ability to grow and develop meaningful relationships with my students and their families.

Failure makes you fall. Strength helps you steady. Resiliency is the ability to rise. But, it is always easier to rise when you have a helping hand to pull you up. ✨



With three graduate degrees from URI – MS in Oceanography, MMA in Marine Affairs, and an MBA – and a distinguished career with the U.S. Federal Government, Catalina Martinez achieved significant academic and professional success against all odds. After dropping out of high school and obtaining a GED, she spent many years working with urban school children and victims of domestic violence while pursuing her education. Throughout her life, Martinez has worked to bridge the equity divide by developing opportunities for groups historically underrepresented and underserved, and she remains determined to help increase potential for life success for individuals born to challenging circumstances.

photo by Agapao Productions

Catalina Martinez

How do we build resilient girls?

How do you build resiliency in your own life?

When I saw the questions that *YW She Shines*[™] posed to the 2015 Women of Achievement recipients, I connected immediately. As a Hispanic woman from an underserved community, I've faced a great deal of adversity in my life, and I had to learn at a very young age how to turn obstacles into detours instead of allowing them to become outright barriers. This ability to remain determined and resilient, and to be deliberate in my actions, feelings, and thoughts despite challenging circumstances, is what has propelled me through life. That's not to say that I don't cave emotionally from time to time, because I certainly do. But it's not so much about what happens to you, it's how you respond that matters most.

A courageous young woman I met recently at the RI Job Corps Academy said it best when she said 'it's not where you're from, it's where you're going; it's not what's on you, it's what's in you.'

Thank you Samantha Harris.

Some people are inherently resilient or come from circumstances that naturally lend themselves toward developing the skills and characteristics of resilience. Thankfully, resilience can be learned, and in my experience, the most resilient people build confidence and strength through navigating difficult situations and overcoming adversity. They learn to solve complex problems and adapt to change, and through trial and error, learn when it's necessary to reach out for help. They surround themselves with good people who champion them and provide essential guidance and support to help make good choices, and they develop a sense of self worth and compassion through building and maintaining strong, positive relationships.

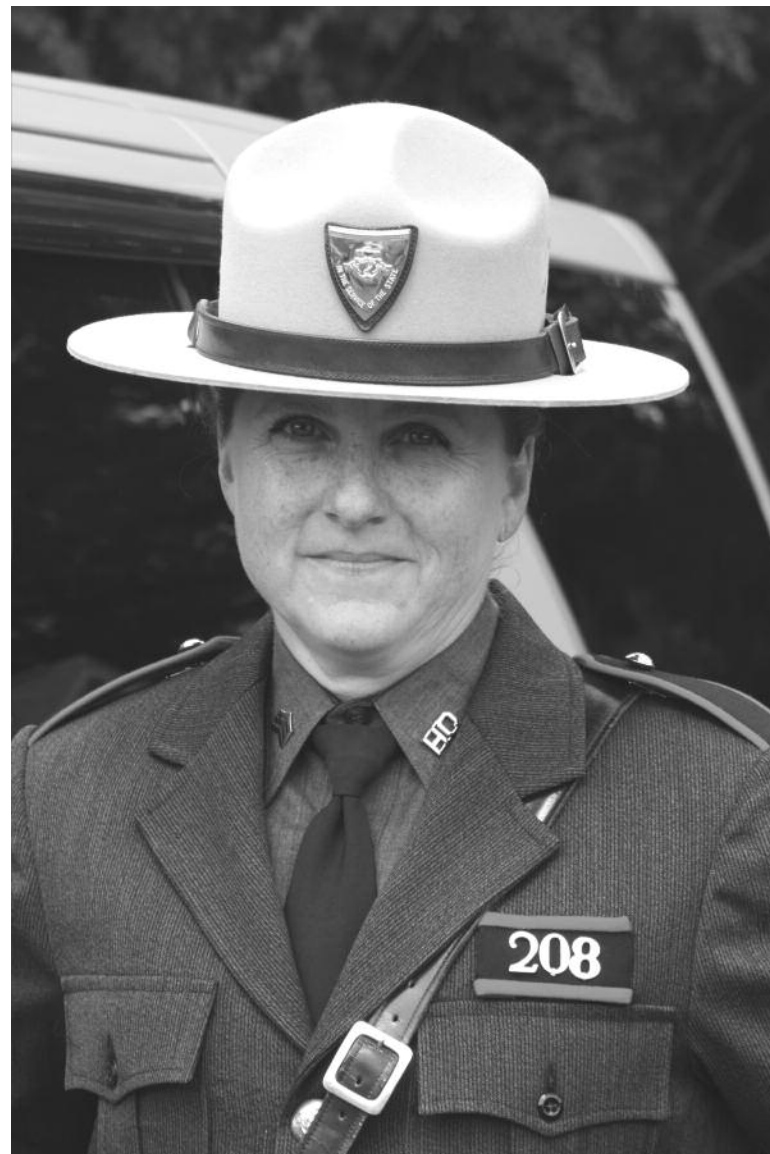
I believe the greatest challenge for young girls in terms of building resilience is that there is so much

destructive messaging around girls and women globally, and the access to this information is immediate and continuous.

I mentor a great deal, and I believe we must teach our girls to look beyond the negativity and expose themselves to new, positive experiences so they don't limit their vision of who they can become. We have to help our girls shift their thoughts and feelings about who they are and where they fit in the world and in society. Girls also must be prepared to work hard and take chances, and they should be coached to think strategically so that when they face obstacles, they learn how to overcome them. And for those who, like me, may not have started out with the best circumstances, they must always remember that where they begin their lives does not have to determine where they end up. ✨

Laurie Ludovici is in her eighteenth year in law enforcement, currently serving as division accreditation manager with the Rhode Island State Police. Under her guidance the Rhode Island State Police was awarded "Accreditation with Excellence" based on the national gold standard assessment model. A combat veteran as well, she retired from the Army National Guard as a major following her tour flying UH-60 Black Hawks in Iraq. Ludovici was the first female candidate from Rhode Island to attend and graduate from the U. S. Army's flight training program. She is a graduate of Roger Williams University. Ludovici was recently selected for a three-year appointment as the sole law enforcement representative to the National Child Safety Board.

photo by Agapao Productions



Laurie Ludovici

How do we build resilient girls?

How do you build resiliency in your own life?

We can help young girls build critical resiliency skills by supporting them while they endure difficult life experiences and by modeling resilient behavior. Whether the challenge is a difficult school work assignment, social conflict, or other pressures, each challenge confronted and brought to resolution builds upon the previous one, providing valuable experience and empowering young girls to keep trying.

Although failure may be feared, girls can learn that failure is only a curve in the road, not the end of the road. Young girls need to be engaged in positive and purposeful interactions with their families and in their schools and communities. Using this engagement and ongoing interactions as a replacement for idle time provides a sense of belonging and accomplishment while building self-esteem.

As I reflect on my years as a parent, being available and being consistent have been useful approaches. I have heard the words "I can't" come out of my children's mouths more than I would like. I wish I could tell you that I have some magical, perfectly choreographed response, but I don't. I strive, and we all should strive, to support and encourage all children to push forward and do the thing they think they can't do.

As a young girl, I used difficult experiences and role models to form an early foundation of resiliency skills. I can recall as a young school girl being terri-

fied to get on the school bus. I would become upset; throw tantrums even, to try to get my mother to let me stay home. She pushed me onto the bus and sometimes through the school doors, forcing me to do the thing I thought I couldn't do. She believed I could get on that bus; I began to believe it too. My mother's support and encouragement during those times is where I began to develop resiliency.

At different stages in my life I have had to work through difficult or trying circumstances. Early in my career, as the first female candidate from the Rhode Island Army National Guard, I went off to Army flight training. I had my reservations and feared returning home as a failure. I learned that fear was not a sign of weakness. Quitting was never an option. Believing in myself and leveraging the experience of others helped me work harder and push myself to exceed my expectations.

Being selected to the State Police recruit training academy was a time of both excitement and anxiety. I had no idea what was in store for me. I relied on my experience in the military to prepare as best I could. I found that breaking this long, intense five month overnight training down into days, that turned into weeks, kept me on track and saw me to successful completion. Quitting was never an option.

The biggest challenge, both personally and pro-

fessionally, came when I learned my National Guard unit was being deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Despite the fact that I had a fairly new husband and two young children at home, not going with my unit was never an option. During this long deployment, I found the unwavering support and encouragement of my family, friends and fellow deployed soldiers allowed me to focus on the mission. Looking back, I relied on the building blocks of resiliency that I had started to form as a young girl.

Recently, after being diagnosed with breast cancer, I looked to the countless women who had fought the battle for encouragement. I needed to see how others endured to believe that I could. I told a fellow survivor, and friend, that I hoped I could get through treatment with only half the grace and dignity she showed. I know she would laugh if I told her she was a role model.

Circumstances and challenges are unique, but what builds resilience often looks the same. My daughter may never serve overseas in combat, have a career in law enforcement, or endure a cancer diagnosis, but it is my hope that she was watching when I did. I assembled those building blocks that my mother helped form years ago. She helped me form high expectations for myself and helped show me that I could meet those expectations. And while at times my resiliency may have wavered, the foundation endured. ❖❖❖



Kathryn “Kat” Quina combined a passion for social justice with academia, teaching Psychology and Women’s Studies and serving in various administrative roles at the Providence campus of the University of Rhode Island. She has coauthored or coedited six books and numerous articles addressing sexual assault and trauma, incarcerated women, HIV risk, multicultural teaching, and gender in the workplace. Active in local and national organizations, she has been recognized locally and nationally for advances in multicultural psychology, mentorship for women, and service to feminist psychology.

photo by Agapao Productions

Kathryn Quina

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

These questions have been ever-present for me through the years I have taught and advised students, studied trauma and recovery, and tried to be a good daughter and mother. I still don’t have an answer, but I have learned a lot.

I think we must redefine resilience. I used to marvel at people who had “gotten over” abuse or who had “made it” in men’s worlds. I thought they must be endowed with super-woman emotional strength (and I wanted some too!). Maybe they were. But I also rejoiced at the self-confidence that emerged as adult women earned their college degrees, escaped violent relationships or birth countries, came back from devastating childhood abuse, and found inner peace even while behind bars. I came to see resilience not as an innate talent granted only to some, but a learned process. I began to measure resilience not by external achievements, but by the very act of coping itself, taking power over one’s own actions, regardless of the

circumstances. And I came to view “thriving” as helping others do the same.

How can you and I help build resilience? Almost every adult learner, abuse survivor, refugee, or incarcerated woman who I could call “resilient” described, with gratitude, someone who believed in them, and in doing so helped them find their own strength. Whether a mother, teacher, a sister, or helping professional, whether they were always there or only in their lives for a brief time, the impact was palpable: “She believed in me, so I believed in myself.” I realized that neither role required superpowers - any of us can do it!

I’ve published research data to support this view, but it was harder to learn how to be that resilience-builder myself - especially for my own daughter! But I thought about my mother, who lived through the Depression and worked through World War II, but was forbidden to pursue the engineering career she craved.

She wasn’t excited about my life choices, but she let me know she loved me with gusto. With that same gusto, she would take us Girl Scouts out into the Florida wilderness, braving snakes and using the latrine we dug with our little camping shovels, allowing us to discover our strengths as she was discovering her own. In her Sunday school class, she engaged fellow housewives in intellectual discussions, providing a space for them to stretch their minds as well as their faith.

Instead of judging her as “wasting” her potential, I began to admire how she had embraced a brave, subversive “Plan B,” building strength in others even as she discovered it in herself. Although I still have trouble labeling myself as resilient, I now know I can make a difference in the world. If I have thrived, it is not because I found that magic cape I was looking for, but because I helped others discover their own strength as I learned my own. May the young women in our lives never have to search for a cape at all! ✨



Kim A. Ripoli is the associate director of the Division of Veterans Affairs for the State of Rhode Island. During her 26 years in the U.S. Navy, she advanced through very competitive ranks. As a result of her efforts, Ripoli received a follow on assignment to The Pentagon. Her military decorations include three Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, eight Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medals, Army Achievement Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal-Saudi Arabia, Kuwait Liberation Medal-Kuwait and various service, unit and campaign awards. She is a key member of the team working on the new \$94 million RI Veteran Home construction project. Ripoli holds a bachelor's degree from Rhode Island College and master's degree from Salve Regina University.

photo by Agapao Productions

Kim A. Ripoli

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

Resilient girls are “built” when they are taught at an early age a true sense of right and wrong; that is the “key stone” to building a strong life foundation. Resilient girls are gutsy, imaginative, spirited, and are not afraid to try different challenges. It is in that foundation of resiliency which enables girls to cultivate strong values and helps to prevent them from succumbing to the negative outside forces, from too much media and social expectations.

In 2015, relationships that promote a resilient mindset through family, friends, civic involvement, education, and athletics increases their sense of belonging, thus making them more resilient to the misogynic messages of denigration, objectification, and marginalization which reduces their self-esteem.

The most important lessons I learned regarding resiliency have been applicable not only to my military career, civilian career, or my public service in government, but most importantly to my personal life.

My father was the epitome of selfless sacrifice, in everything he did whether it was his family or his career. To say he was an intellectual, does not do him justice, he was fluent in five languages, was a chemist and pharmacist, and voracious reader, who was forever teaching his youngest child, me, about the values of integrity, personal responsibility and education.

Back in the 1960s and 70s, in South Jersey a girl like me was termed a “Tom-Boy”. I had a unique personality, a dichotomy of a high achiever and team player. In 1988, the Navy introduced to me their core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, which was just another layer of the family values I had learned. As a child I loved history, especially military history. I always admired those who fought in combat and often wondered if I possessed the intestinal fortitude to do the same.

Well in 1991, that question was answered with my first war deployment to Fleet Hospital #15 for Operation Desert Shield/Storm and watching the

Scud missiles flying overhead.

However in 2003, it was my Iraq War deployment with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force that put my foundation of core values and resiliency to the test! I attribute my resiliency during those nine months in that austere environment to a rigid moral compass, courtesy of the nuns of St. Joan of Arc, tough work ethic from my parents and extended Ripoli family, and an openness to change and challenges.

Finally, I am always reminded of a poem my dad had me learn as a 9 year old following my nanna's death:

“I walked a mile with Pleasure; She chatted all the way; But left me none the wiser For all she had to say. I walked a mile with Sorrow; And ne'er a word said she; But, oh! The things I learned from her, When Sorrow walked with me.” — Robert Browning





Charon L. Rose is the director of constituent relations for General Treasurer Seth Magaziner. Rose is a lifelong Rhode Islander with deep roots in the capital city, Providence. A graduate of Classical High School, she is a first generation college graduate receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Rhode Island College. Growing up in the city's Chad Brown neighborhood, Rose had an early understanding of social inequality and injustices. Because of that, she became active in local politics and has been a volunteer and staff member for a number of elected officials. Rose is president of the Young Democrats of Rhode Island, the organization's first Black president, and co-director of New Leaders Council Rhode Island.

photo by Agapao Productions

Charon L. Rose

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

Women are strong. Women are encouraging and hopeful. We are quick to recover and reform. We are resilient. It is that resiliency, strong and encouraging hope, which builds resilient girls.

Society likes to put women in neat, defined boxes that suppress our individuality. Resilient girls are built by women empowered to be multifaceted and complete in their lives.

Our culture values a man's opinion more than a female's. Resilient girls are built by women with strong convictions and confident in their views and values.

Too often young girls are forced to conform to society's views because of judgement and ridicule. We build resilient girls by opening our hearts and asking questions full of love and respect rather than judgement.

Resilient girls are inquisitive and explore the world around them. They are optimistic, goal oriented, they look for opportunities to grow into well rounded women, and they never view themselves as victims.

Resilient girls are built by resilient women who understand the need to cultivate a generation of compassionate, fierce trailblazers.

"In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better, pushing right back." — Albert Camus

I personally believe building resiliency is about personal growth and viewing every moment as a teachable experience. Growth is hard and sometimes disappointing, it can be judgmental and unbiased but it is a necessity of a productive life. Resiliency is learning how to channel that growth and use it towards the betterment of your life and your community.

I am very cognizant of my past; it helps guide me towards the future I am trying to build. I learn from my successes but more importantly, my failures. These are teachable moments that help the growth of my resolve and resilience. I find that my most honest thoughts and brazen ideas have been awoken in me during my darkest hours, those are my favorite teachable moments and best way to build resiliency. ❖❖❖



Carlene Casciano-McCann has been the executive director of St. Mary's Home for Children since 2008. She holds a bachelor's degree from Stonehill College and master's degree from Rhode Island College. Recognizing the need for an approach based on dignity, meaning and youth and family voice and choice, Casciano-McCann has focused on improving all facets of service delivery in order to provide trauma-informed services to the youth and families served by St. Mary's Home for Children.

photo by Agapao Productions

Carlene Casciano-McCann

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

Having received a request to write an essay on how to build resilient girls, I considered it a fairly easy task since I have served, and worked with, amazingly resilient people throughout my life. However, once I started to write, the task became much more complex than I imagined.

I'm not sure any of us know how we will bounce back from life's challenges until we're faced with overwhelming stressors. If we are fortunate, we have acquired some resilience "training wheels" as we move through childhood having experienced small disappointments, obstacles to getting what you want, failing, etc. These less weighty situations buoyed by supportive adults can prepare us for those that have the potential to be devastating.

Learning to cope with and rise above difficulties can be taught. If we use mistakes and/or failures as learning opportunities rather than something for

which to feel ashamed, we embolden our girls to take risks, venture forth and exude confidence. Girls need positive relationships with adults from who they can be validated for their thoughts, opinions and feelings; adults who can instill a sense of optimism, perspective and hope; who can tolerate uncertainty and who role model resilience. Just as important, girls need to be affirmed and reinforced for exhibiting grit and staying the course when facing challenges.

We need to teach girls the power of problem-solving rather than "fix" things for them. Being there to help them talk through a solution to a problem or a plan for moving forward teaches our girls self-efficacy. Young girls must be taught that what they say matters.

Regarding how I build resiliency in my own life, I would say that I was blessed with a strong foundation by my parents. Team sports from elementary school through college supplemented the foundation

and helped me realize the important role that others play in strengthening my resolve. Building a strong support system is vital in weathering those storms that arise throughout life.

As I was assuming the executive director position at my agency, we were on the verge of closing our doors for good. Fortunately, I was a member of a team that never gave up even when the odds seemed insurmountable. With each obstacle we encountered, we found ways around, over or through it. Together, we became an unstoppable force that managed to turn around a failing organization. In answer to how I build resilience in my own life, I have surrounded myself with supportive, passionate, strong individuals who hold similar values and who do not give up. Building resilience is a team effort. ❖❖❖



Carmen Diaz-Jusino has been with the Center for Women & Enterprise, for the past eight years. She has a diverse array of professional experience – educator, community resources representative, job developer, counselor for teenagers, Spanish interpreter and manager. Diaz-Jusino is also an entrepreneur having started a learning center in her home country, the Dominican Republic. Today she is the director of New Enterprise and WBC, for CWE's four locations in New England. She holds degrees in Social Studies and Psychology and a Master in Science-Concentration in Organizational Management and Leadership.

photo by Agapao Productions

Carmen Diaz-Jusino

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

In today's world, women of all ages need to develop strengths, learn skills to deal with challenges, recover from hardships, and be prepared for anything that life throw at them. In the media, we are seeing more women trailblazing leadership paths for younger women to take and go beyond gender stereotypes. Hence, we need to stimulate in young girls the need to be resilient in order to succeed in life. Resilience is not an innate skill that has been programmed in our genetic blueprint. Resilience is a skill that can be thought and learned which can propel younger generations of girls into a promising future.

As I reflect at my role as the director of New Enterprise and Women's Business Center at the Center for Women and Enterprise (CWE), I believe that instilling resiliency in young girls, has an important role in their developing minds and unique personali-

ties. At CWE, we utilize the "4 C's" (Competence, Confidence, Connections and Capital) to help new and established entrepreneurs learn and strengthen their skillsets. The same core principles can be installed in young girls, however, I would change at this time capital for control.

First, recognize the fact that we are competent enough to handle any situation and empowered to take appropriate decisions. Nurturing competence in young girls will enable them to recognize the ability of handling different and sometimes difficult situations.

Second, building confidence in girls' abilities to manage all aspects of their lives by letting them know what they do well, recognizing their achievements and helping them overcome challenges.

Third, developing connections is very important in the lives of young girls. It is imperative that we create opportunities for girls to build relationships

with professional women who can help shape their confidence, act as role models, and provide support in difficult situations.

Lastly, she must understand that she controls her present goals and future aspirations. Moreover, she must realize that she is in control of her decisions, while seeking advice from others. This is very powerful and will also boost her competence and confidence, too.

In my life, I also practice the "four C's", understanding how important it is to be informed, to know my strengths and my challenges in both my professional and personal life. In addition, I have created a support network of people in my life that I can reach out to them when I need a helping hand. As we build resilience in our lives, we are shaping our confidence and we are in control of our destiny.



Deborah DeBare, executive director of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, has been there for nearly twenty years. Prior, she spent five years at Domestic Violence Resource Center, four years at RI Rape Crisis Center and two years working for State of Rhode Island in the Department of Mental Health. A Brown University graduate with a B.A. in American Civilization, DeBare also holds a Master in Management of Human Services from the Heller School at Brandeis University. DeBare has been involved in numerous boards and task forces, including National Network to End Domestic Violence, RI Coalition for the Homeless, RI Emergency Food & Shelter Board, National IPV Prevention Council, and United Way Community Investment Advisory Council.

photo by Agapao Productions

Deborah DeBare

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

I don't think we realize how significant and formative early life experiences can be, until the years and decades give us the wisdom of perspective. For me, I believe that my teen age years on the basketball court unknowingly and unintentionally provided me with a set of life skills and values, including attributes such as resiliency, determination, teamwork, focus and the importance of pure fun. These skills have been put to use, and tested time and again in my work to end violence against women.

I've learned to pivot with only a moment's notice. I've learned how important it is to have a strong defense, as well as an aggressive offense. I've figured out when to box out, and how to build a

strong bench. I've benefited from great coaching and mentoring, and tried to give back in these areas. And one of the best lessons I've experienced, on the court and in the workplace, is that even when you get elbowed or fouled, or knocked to the floor, you need to get yourself right back up on your own feet and get back in the game. That's the grit that builds resiliency, and it's that type of resiliency that has bolstered me for the long term work of ending violence against women.

To build resilient girls we need strong women as role models; we need to encourage girls to take risks and to try new things. We need to teach them to pivot, to stand strong and to rely on each other since

the whole team is always stronger than the individual alone. We need to show them that even if we are "double-teamed" there are various ways to get out of a jam.

When I think of the resiliency that is needed for the "long haul," to truly build a society based on gender equity where our girls will not have to live in a world that accepts violence against women, I draw my inspiration from the victims of domestic violence who have had the courage to step up and speak out on this issue. The progress we have made, the resiliency of the domestic violence movement, and my own personal resiliency is a testament to these courageous survivors. ✨



In 1969, desegregation forced 9-year-old Cheryl Albright to step out of her familiar black church, school, and community in the foothills of North Carolina into a white school where she and four other black students learned about racism. Singing became her ticket to acceptance. She has lived in Rhode Island since 1980 and has performed throughout the Atlantic seacoast. Her production "Oh Freedom Over Me!" weaves her own story and those of five African-American women singers from 1880 through the turbulent Twentieth Century.

photo by Agapao Productions

Cheryl Albright

How do we build resilient girls?
How do you build resiliency in your own life?

Faith has played a key role in my life from early childhood to becoming an adult. I was always taught to believe against the odds even if I did not see or understand how things would happen in my life. I never gave up and took nothing for granted.

As a single and divorced mom, my life was full of test and trials. At times, I did not know how I was going to make ends meet. God placed some very special women in my life to let me know my worth and value.

These positive influences helped me to realize that knowing and loving me is the best gift I can give myself. They let me know I was not in condemnation because of my circumstances. These women were nurturing, supportive, and their words strengthened

me. They really helped me to gain a new perspective during a difficult time.

I believe that life's challenges can be turned into something good. Mentally preparing myself for something great to happen while on this journey far outweighed the obstacles I was facing. I was encouraged to never give up on my dreams.

There is a saying that "life is a bowl of cherries." What I believe is that "Life does not always go in the ideal direction." It is important to know there will be bumps and bruises as we grow and mature. Some opportunities are good and others are not. This does not mean that you give up on yourself. Passion and determination helps to overcome most of the obstacles.

The wise must teach and mentor the young so they will gain wisdom and teach others. Speaking positive into someone's life will always bring about cause and effect change. We must teach young girls to dream and write those dreams down so they are able to visually understand where they are headed in life. We must instill that they are here for a unique purpose only they are able to accomplish (how special can that be). Let's teach them to never give up and take nothing for granted.

Most of all, let's encourage them to savor and celebrate those teaching moments that will be nuggets of gold in their lives. ✨

“YWCA is thrilled to have the volunteer services of these two wonderful organizations.”

- Deborah Perry, President/CEO of YWCA Rhode Island

Rebuilding Together Providence and volunteers from Honeywell Hometown Solutions



Volunteer days were coordinated by Rebuilding Together Providence with assistance from volunteers at Honeywell Hometown Solutions. In 2014, fall projects were completed at the Central Falls/Pawtucket Campus of YWCA Rhode Island such as building raised garden beds, repairing fences, cleaning up the grounds, painting walls, and hanging new curtains/blinds. In 2015, summer projects were completed at YWCA Camp Hamilton such as clearing trails, refurbishing basketball courts, building benches, restoring picnic tables and painting various exterior locations in and around the camp.

photo courtesy of Honeywell Hometown Solutions

How do we build a resilient community?

by Jane C. Eskelund, Executive Director of Rebuilding Together Providence

The word community is derived from the word common and it means that which a group holds in common. Most of us use the word as a description of the world that surrounds us, but we often forget that we are a vital part of that world, the one in which we have a common interest with everyone else in our group. A resilient community is one that is not only strong, but is long lasting, and it benefits everyone who is a part of that group.

A community can not stand on its own. In order for it to even exist, there has to be a compelling reason for people to gather together for a common purpose. And for a resilient community to grow and prosper, members must take part in the building and maintenance of that community so that all may benefit from its rewards.

Community does not mean someone else

takes care of things. Community means you get involved. And resilient communities happen when lots of people get involved.

How does Rebuilding Together foster resilient communities? Rebuilding Together identifies critical needs and gathers people from the community to address those needs. Our volunteers are all ages and come from all walks of life. They all come together to make a difference, and to teach others that where there is a common purpose, great things can be accomplished.

When it comes to building community, no one has to be an expert. All you have to do is be willing to join in the effort, contribute your time and talent, and not be afraid to do your best. When people see the results of this, it becomes a rallying point and serves a powerful example of how to build resilient communities. . . .

Rebuilding Together works to positively impact whole communities through rehabilitation of homes and surrounding schools, parks, gardens and nonprofit facilities. They are engaged in creating changes across the country with the help of everyday citizen volunteers, skilled tradespeople and the support of local business and corporate partners. Rebuilding Together Providence has provided these services in Rhode Island for more than 20 years.

Honeywell Hometown Solutions, company's global citizenship initiative, along with leading public and non-profit institutions, is connecting in powerful ways. Since 2003, Honeywell is a national sponsor for Rebuilding Together, and combined with their expertise, are dedicated to helping struggling families live healthier and safer lives.



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empowering women **ywca**



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“We Get Girls Into the Computer Sciences Pipeline”™

Dear Friend:

One of the biggest challenges in growing Rhode Island’s economy is training, recruiting and retaining software developers – of which less than 20 percent are female. The lack of skills in the state’s labor pool, combined with the gender gap, is problematic for Rhode Island’s economy.

To educate, inspire and equip girls to pursue careers in computer sciences, and to increase the number of Rhode Islanders qualified to fill positions in emerging technology careers, YWCA Rhode Island, in partnership with Bryant University and volunteers from Amica Mutual Insurance Company created the Fantastic Girtastic Code Company™.

Fantastic Girtastic Code Company™ is dedicated to demystifying code through girl-centric training, access to female role models and mentors, and connections to local institutions of higher education and employers provides a systematic way for girls to participate in technology, and

participate in meaningful ways that will lead them to seek local college degrees and local careers in the computer sciences.

The program is offered afterschool, during summer vacation and provides a monthly hackathon for girls and women to participate regardless of age or ability.

Please consider becoming a part of this collaboration. Donations are appreciated and will be used to purchase computers.

My sincere thanks,

Deborah

Deborah L. Perry
President/Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Rhode Island



**We invite you to help support
Fantastic Girtastic Code Company™.
Your donation will assist in the
purchase of computers.**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Enclosed is a donation in the amount of:

\$750

\$150

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Thank you for your kindness!

Mail to:
YWCA Rhode Island
514 Blackstone Street
Woonsocket, RI 02895



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“We Get Girls Into the Computer Sciences Pipeline”™

FANTASTIC GIRLTASTIC CODE COMPANY™

is based on best practices and serves a dual purpose:

- 1. To get girls interested in computer sciences, and**
- 2. To provide intensive code training connected to a system that provides a path between academic and professional worlds, in other words -- a pipeline.**

The uniqueness of the program is its focus on across-the-board collaboration. We recruit girls in teams. We have a built-in, multilayered mentoring system. And we have connections to institutions of higher education and employers.



fantastic girtastic code company™

“We Get Girls Into the Computer Sciences Pipeline”™

How Do We Get Girls Into the Computer Sciences Pipeline?

- We provide access to intensive girl-centric training and connect girls to role models, colleges, universities and industry leaders
- We offer a curriculum informed by student interests
- We create environments for girls
- We work in groups and with peers
- We provide female role models
- We develop media that encourages girls to explore computer sciences



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“We Get Girls Into the Computer Sciences Pipeline”™

Anticipated short-term measurable impacts include:

- Increase in the number of young women involved in design and development of technology
- Increase in the number of young women enrolled in computer science majors at local colleges and universities
- Creation of a pipeline of talent to fill positions in technology-driven sectors in Rhode Island.

Anticipated long-term impacts include:

- Increase statewide economic growth
- Diversification of Rhode Island’s workforce
- Enhanced business performance and innovation



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