
Girls Inc. of Columbus & Phenix Russell

PARENT HANDBOOK



**girls
inc.**

Inspiring all girls
to be strong,
smart, and bold

TO INSPIRE ALL GIRLS TO BE

Only 62% of US college women graduate.

“My future plans are to become a mathematics and Early Childhood Education professor at Albany State University. After I retire, I want to become the CEO of Girls Incorporated of America and take its programs and missions to a global level.”

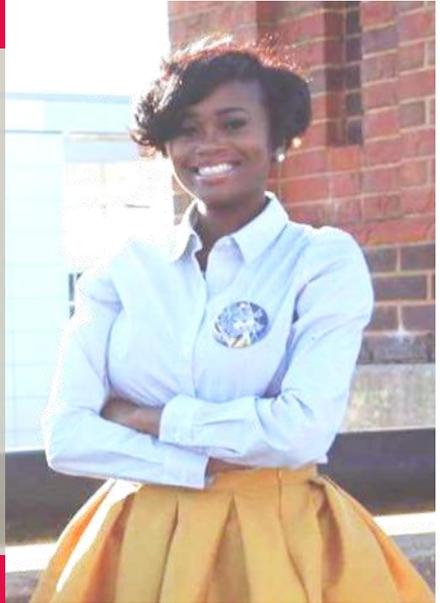
— Geniquiya “GeGe” Merideth

Albany State University Class of 2017

Miss ASU 2016

***Ebony* 2017 “Top Ten HBCU Queens”**

Girls Inc. of Columbus 2005-2015



97% of Girls Inc. Scholars Earn Degrees.

STRONG, SMART, AND BOLD



As an affiliate of Girls Incorporated, Girls Inc. of Columbus and Phenix-Russell is part of a network of 85 Girls Inc. organizations that serve more than 145,000 girls throughout the U.S. and Canada. This affiliation provides outstanding educational programs and scholarship opportunities for our girls, as well as excellent training for our staff.

We operate our programs from two centers: the Baker Center on Levy Road, which serves girls in south Columbus, and the Dorothy Hyatt Center on Kolb Avenue, which serves girls in north Columbus. We currently serve more than 1,300 girls ages 6-18 from diverse ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Programs

Girls Inc. empowers girls to succeed by providing trusted mentor relationships, a girls-only environment, and research-based, hands-on programming.

Our afterschool program runs throughout the school year. We provide academic support and homework assistance, team sports, and targeted Girls Inc. programs that offer opportunities for girls to develop leadership skills, explore careers, and discover new interests.



Our full-day summer program begins in late May and runs through early August. Summer activities include swimming, an overnight camping trip, field trips, theater, STEM activities, and sports mini-camps, as well as academic support and literacy programs to prevent summer learning loss.



We also have a very high-quality year-round sports program, offering a wide variety of team activities including soccer, volleyball, basketball, softball, swimming, running, sport stacking, and even competitive jump rope. There are many opportunities for girls to stay active and involved year-round.



Program Staff

We are very proud of our program staff and volunteers, several of whom have mentored several generations of Girls Inc. girls. In addition to having the appropriate experience, skills and qualifications, program staff must demonstrate a special interest in helping girls develop independent life skills and believe in the value of a girls-only environment.

All staff participates in regular training to make sure their programming expertise is current, and to improve their skills working with the girls. Staff also attends in-depth program training at the Girls Inc. National Training Center in Indianapolis, as well as external professional development training.



Safety

The safety of the girls we serve is our paramount concern. As part of the hiring process, every employee of Girls Inc. undergoes a criminal background check (including a check of the National Sex Offender Registry), a motor vehicle records (MVR) check, and a drug test. In addition, all program staff receives annual van driver training, CPR training, and state-approved training in recognizing child abuse and neglect. Every volunteer who comes into contact with girls also is required to undergo a criminal background and sex offender registry check.



Child Abuse Policy

Under Georgia law, Girls Inc. of Columbus is a mandated reporter. If a child discloses any information to any employee or volunteer

indicating that she is/has been abused by someone, or if abuse is suspected, it is our responsibility to report this.

In addition, Girls Inc. of Columbus & Phenix-Russell has a zero-tolerance policy regarding actual or threatened acts of child abuse that occur at any Girls Inc. facility or at any activity sponsored by or associated with the organization. Anyone in violation of this policy is subject to immediate termination and permanent expulsion from Girls Inc. premises and events.

Reporting Procedures

All employees and volunteers are required and authorized to report suspected or known child abuse or neglect to a Center Director or the Executive Director.

In an urgent situation, the Director or Executive Director will immediately contact the appropriate law enforcement agency. After that contact, the next step is to follow mandated reporting procedures as required by the State of Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

Complete responsibility and authority for investigation of the suspected abuse or neglect rests with DFCS and/or law enforcement officials. Girls Inc. employees and volunteers are prohibited from contacting the child's family or any person(s) other than law enforcement or DFCS officials.

Fees

Every girl must be a member of Girls Inc. in order to participate in any activity. This includes sports, college visits, field trips, and cheerleading. Our membership period is from July 1 through June 30 of each year. We do not pro-rate membership fees for partial years or occasional participation. The Annual Membership Fee is \$20 per girl.

Girls Inc. will never deny any girl the opportunity to participate in our programs because of financial constraints. Financial aid is available and families experiencing financial hardship are asked to speak with the Center Director to discuss their individual situation.



Visitors

Girls Inc. is always happy to have visiting girls at our Centers. A parent or legal guardian of the visitor must complete a registration form in advance of the visit.



Visitor fees are \$25.00 per week for a maximum of two (2) weeks. Visitors wishing to attend longer than two weeks must pay the annual

membership fee and the applicable program fee. Girls Inc. reserves the right to limit the number of visitors.

Center Closings

Girls Inc. generally observes ten (10) holidays each year. The administrative offices and centers are closed on these holidays. A schedule with the exact dates of the holidays is published in July of each year.

Holiday	Observed
New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Third Monday in January
President's Day	Third Monday in February
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November
Day After Thanksgiving	Friday following Thanksgiving
Christmas Eve	December 24
Christmas Day	December 25

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, it generally will be observed on the Friday immediately before the holiday. If it falls on a Sunday, it generally will be observed on the Monday immediately following the holiday. In certain years, there may be exceptions to this schedule.

In addition, our centers are closed for staff training during the first and last weeks of the school year and for approximately two weeks during the Christmas holidays to allow our program staff to take well-deserved vacation time. Reminders of all scheduled closings are posted in advance.

In the event of inclement weather or other situations that result in school closings, please tune in to local news and radio stations for official announcements of Girls Inc. closings. In general, if Muscogee County Schools are closed for inclement weather, Girls Inc. Centers also are closed.

Dress Code

Girls should dress appropriately for the weather year-round. Weather permitting, girls spend a portion of each day playing outside and should bring jackets or sweaters in the fall and winter. In addition, shoes are required at all times in all areas of the Center except on the pool deck.

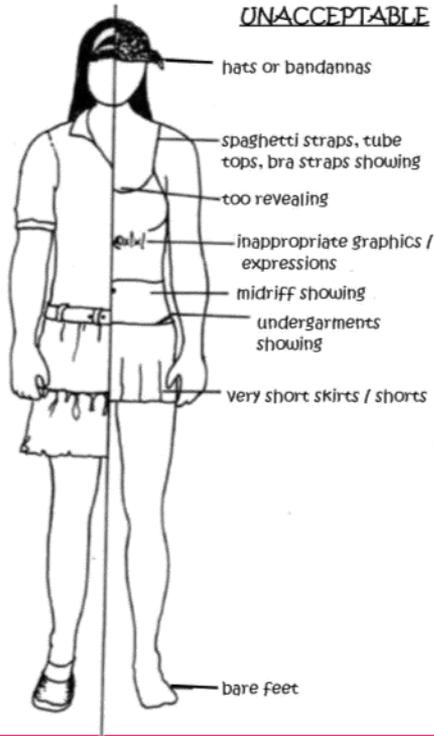
Girls Inc. reserves the right to determine whether clothing is inappropriate. If a girl wears inappropriate clothing, parents will be contacted to bring a change of clothes. If the parents are unable to do so or are unreachable, appropriate clothing for the day will be provided from our clothes closet.

Girls Inc. of Columbus DRESS CODE

ACCEPTABLE

- Clothing that covers the body from the top of the shoulders to mid-thigh.
- Clothing that completely covers all underwear garments and is not revealing.
- Any apparel that promotes the use of alcohol, drugs, profanity, degradation of an individual or group, or that is sexually explicit is unacceptable.
- Appropriate footwear must be worn for health and safety reasons.
- Hats and bandannas are not to be worn in the building.
- Sunglasses are not to be worn in the building.

UNACCEPTABLE



Expected Behavior

In order for Girls Inc. to be a safe, healthy community, each girl must be aware of her responsibilities and the consequences of her actions - both for herself and for others. Our rules are sensible and helpful in making each child feel safe and secure. We ask that you reinforce these rules and encourage your child to follow them.



Center Rules

- Be positive, honest, and play fair.
- Treat other people and their property with respect.
- Dress appropriately.
- Treat Girls Inc. property and surroundings with care.
- **No cell phones.**
- Improper language is not allowed.
- Chewing gum is not allowed anywhere at Girls Inc.
- Keep your hands and your feet to yourself.
- Do not run anywhere in the building (except the gym).
- Eat only in designated areas and place all trash in a trash can.

Pool Safety Rules

- Everyone must pass a swim test before entering the pool for the first time each year.



- Lifeguards must be obeyed at all times.
- No horseplay, diving, or running.
- A towel and sunscreen are required.
- Everyone must wear a red or white swim cap.
- Food and drinks are not allowed.

Center Discipline

For minor incidents, program staff will give verbal warnings and may ask a girl to “rest” (similar to a “time out”) until she is ready to participate again in a positive manner. Repeated minor offenses will result in more significant interventions. All suspensions are determined by the Center Director.

Certain behaviors will result in immediate expulsion. These include, but are not limited to, the possession or use of alcohol, drugs, or weapons on Girls Inc. premises or while at a Girls Inc. activity. Harmful physical contact, intentional behavior that puts the girl or others at risk of physical harm, or the use of improper language will result in an automatic 3-5 day suspension.

Parent Conferences

We encourage and welcome parental involvement, and program staff is available for scheduled conferences to discuss the needs of your daughter. All parent requests for conferences must be made through the Center Director. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Transportation

During the school year, transportation to both centers is provided by Girls Inc. vans as well as Muscogee County school buses. Vans will not wait more than 10 minutes. Please make sure your daughter understands that she must get to the van promptly when school is dismissed.

In order for a member to ride in a Girls Inc. van, parents must complete the transportation permission section on the member registration form. Seating is limited and van sign-ups are on a first-come, first-served basis.

Transportation in Girls Inc. vans is a courtesy, not a benefit of membership. Van space is limited and can be provided only for girls who regularly participate in our programs.

Please notify your Center Director immediately if your daughter will no longer use our transportation service. After three days of no notification, we reserve the right to give your daughter’s seat to another girl.



The following safety guidelines are posted in all Girls Inc. vans:

- Follow the driver's instructions at all times.
- No eating or drinking in the vehicle.
- Remain seated with seatbelts fastened while the vehicle is in motion.
- Keep hands or heads inside the vehicle.
- Never enter or exit the vehicle through the back door unless instructed to do so by an adult.

Bus riders are expected to follow the same standards of conduct as van riders. Girls reported to our Center for misbehavior on the school bus are subject to the same disciplinary action as girls who ride in Girls Inc. vans. Failure to follow Girls Inc. guidelines may result in suspension or termination of transportation privileges.

Additional Information

- For the safety of your child, Girls Inc. will not release a child to any individual who is not listed in our database as an authorized pick up. Telephone authorization will not be accepted.
- Sign-ups for field trips are on a first-come, first-served basis and space may be limited. For field trips that require a fee, money and permission slips must be turned in together.
- Please keep your daughter home if she is ill.
- Lockers are available for daily use on a on a first-come, first-served basis. Space is limited.
- All personal items must be kept in a locker or backpack. Girls Inc. assumes no responsibility for the security of personal items brought to our centers.
- In the event of an unscheduled early school dismissal, Girls Inc. will not pick up at schools. Parents are responsible for picking up their child.
- Smoking and the possession or use of drugs, alcohol and weapons by **anyone** on Girls Inc. property is prohibited.

Contact Information

Baker Center

Leona Smith, Center Director
3535 Levy Road
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Dorothy Hyatt Center

Priscilla Zellner, Center Director
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Administrative Offices

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