

From Girl Scouts to Girl Reporters: Immersing tomorrow's media professionals in hands-on learning today



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Girls in the Girl Reporter program from the Girl Scouts of San Geronio Council are learning how to harness the power of social media, and other mass media, to highlight the good things happening in the world and their communities and also how to be a voice for the greater good. Girl Reporters often report their stories via the Girl Scouts Twitter account and Facebook page. But sometimes, it's fun to just have a little insta-fun, too!

By Cynthia Mendoza

In the not too distant future, the Inland Empire will be home to some of the sharpest up-and-coming media professionals, due to the mentorship and learning opportunities of the Girl Scouts of San Geronio Council Girl Reporter Program, which provides young girls with hands-on opportunities to write, edit and report about their experiences and learn about careers in media and communications.

The Girl Reporter program is part of the larger Classroom to Careers exploration program that exposes young women to many different career options.

Through the Girl Reporter program, which is funded by Doing What Matters through the San Bernardino Community College District and private individuals, girls immerse themselves in the fields of media, journalism, broadcasting and communications by learning how to conduct interviews, take photos and videos at events, and write reports.

The goal of the program is to introduce girls to the field of media by giving them opportunities to create original content and compelling stories about their experiences.

Girl reporters learn how to write, identify "newsworthy" stories, how to create podcasts, trailers and video resumes, the latter which is becoming increasingly common in the job market and college applications.

"Previously there was a lot of focus on STEM [programs], so we asked if there would be an interest in communications, journalism and social media," said Jua-Nita Houston, Vice President for Exter-

gram every year.

The more experienced girls are called Senior Reporters, and they engage in activities such as conducting Facebook Lives and vlogging. The newer girls, called Junior Reporters, start out by writing, and learning some of the fundamentals of media before moving on to other things.

Each girl is responsible for conducting interviews, writing ten news articles or stories with corresponding newsworthy photography, one video production, and one video resume as a final project.

At first, stories are assigned by staff, but as the girls gain experience and confidence, they start to come up with their own story ideas and original content.

During the summer session, the girls will attend Apple Camp where they will learn from experts in local Apple Stores to shoot their own footage, import music/footage, and edit all material together in iMovie using their iPads.

This year the Girl Reporter program will also collaborate with KCAA Talk Radio, and the girls will learn new skills and concepts such as producing, shooting, and anchoring, and will also benefit from the mentorship of Erin Brinker, host of the "On the Brink" Morning Show.

"I hope they take away confidence and a belief in their capacity to pursue a career in mass communications," Brinker said of the girls' upcoming visit to the KCAA studio in San Bernardino.

The Girl Reporter program has been so successful and transformative for the girls that other Girl Scout Councils outside of California have been contacting the San Geronio Council to find out about starting similar programs in their areas.

But perhaps one of the most meaningful outcomes of the Girl Reporter program, besides giving young women an incredible head start in their career planning and skills, is not so much about what they do as much as how they grow as individuals through the experi-



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Through the Girl Reporter program of the Girl Scouts of San Geronio, young girls learn about careers in media and communications through hands-on learning. The girls learn how to identify "newsworthy" stories, how to write and podcast, and also visit local radio and television studios and gain a firsthand experience in the various aspects of media production.

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"Some girls were really shy at first," Houston said. "But through the program, meeting people and conducting interviews, they really overcame."

According to Houston, one young lady in particular who had been extremely shy, surprised even her mother by asking to sit in the anchor chair during one of the media tours.

"I got this," the young reporter said, as she confidently took a seat in the anchor chair at a TV studio.

"This program allows them to build confidence as they step out of their comfort zone," Houston added.

And it also teaches the young girls the importance of using their voice for the greater good.

"Few people understand market-

ing," Houston concluded. "But marketing is a way of using your voice to foster change or highlight the good things. It all starts with one person and one voice."

Visit <https://girlscoutsnw.com> and click on Girl Reporter to view some of the Girl Reporter stories and listen to their podcasts.

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For more information on the Girl Scouts of San Geronio, visit their website at <http://www.gssgc.org>.

nal Relations for the Girl Scouts of San Geronio Council, referring to the Classrooms to Careers program at large. "Media is a growing field."

The response was overwhelmingly positive; there were about 30 applicants the first year.

The program aimed to expose the girls to as many different media channels as possible, such as radio and television, so partnerships were created with local media such as 99.1 KGGI, Local Matters from Cal State San Bernardino, national broadcasting affiliate stations and newspapers so the girls could experience all things media.

In its third year, the program now includes vlogging, which is a blog with video content, and YouTube. Currently there are 65 girls in the program, and approximately 15 new girls join the pro-

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