

## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual “Live Your Dream” Girls’ Conference

**Mission:** To provide a forum for girls from diverse backgrounds that will promote sisterhood, foster healthy decision-making, nurture a vision for the future and strengthen each girl’s confidence.

**Format:** The “Live Your Dream” Conference was held at Dutchess Community College on November 7, 2009. In the opening activity, the girls received t-shirts and journals and worked on a “puzzle” craft project. State Legislator Susan John then addressed the girls and answered questions. Ms. John spoke about issues that were important to women, like health care and Equal Pay and Title IX. The girls were incredibly polite and attentive and asked good questions. At one point Ms. John said that someone told her, “A dream is a goal with a deadline.” Several girls repeated that sentence in their evaluations! Each one of the 68 girls attended one of 5 workshops and a “Girl Talk Circle.” At the closing, they were encouraged to be responsible, kind, and to celebrate themselves.

**Outcomes:** Girls were asked, “What was the most important thing you learned today?” They wrote: I learned, “Just to be yourself,” “I can be what I want,” “Not to listen to others, life has no limit,” “Respect yourself and others,” “How to make friends by just sitting down at a table,” and “You can do whatever you dream.”

**Volunteers:** Generous and talented women, including many AAUW members, volunteered to conduct workshops. College students from both Marist and Dutchess Community Colleges helped facilitate. Over 25 women from our organization worked to register girls, observe and monitor workshops, decorate journals, sort materials and visit schools. Guidance counselors from Poughkeepsie Middle School, interns and Dutchess Community faculty and administrators also volunteered.

**Special thanks:** The conference was possible because of the generosity of the members of AAUW who participated in the “Sponsor a Girl” program. Our facilitators donated their time and talent to facilitate workshops. Special gratitude to Angela Batchelor, writer, editor, graphic designer; Lydia Biskup, professional lecturer in Fashion Merchandising and Coordinator of Marist College Fashion Internship and Placement; Allison Bundy-Travis, educator, author, and advocate for children; Joan Henry, Native American artist/composer/performer and artistic program director at Mill Street Loft; Brenda Hicks, Certified Kripalu Yoga Instructor; Gwen Higgins, educator, diversity trainer, and speaker; Marisa Gomez-Lewis, Teen Life Connections Program Coordinator and Kristin Barton with the Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse; Joan Monk, an AAUW state Director of Cultural Interests and Education Director of the Peter Pan Children’s Fund.