

Effort Name: YWCA Tech GYRLS

Please complete this form for your **Economic Empowerment Hallmark effort**.

Effort Description: (Describe the effort)

YWCA Bristol collaborates with the principals, teachers and guidance staff from the BTCS (Bristol Tennessee City Schools). Guidance counselors refer **girls from the 4th-9th grades that receive free or reduced lunch, are at risk of educational disadvantage and failure due to circumstances of abuse, neglect or disability, are at risk of failing one or more subjects or are behind a grade level by at least one year** to participate in this FREE, after-school program. Afterschool services are provided for 15 hours per week that gets involved in the lives of the young girls in our community. **We provide them educational support, computer and technology training, and life skill development.** Tech GYRLS provides girls experiences in reading comprehension, math and science enrichment, self-expression and public speaking, recreation, cultural awareness, personal health, substance avoidance, and a wide range of service learning and exploration that would be otherwise not available to them. The program provides supervised access to computer technology for completing homework and the YWCA Tech GYRLS curriculum, tutoring and mentoring, physical, health and wellness activities, a healthy state approved snack and transportation to and from the program. These essential tools allow the girls to broaden their opportunities for higher education, breaking the cycle of teen pregnancy, poverty and drug abuse, three major obstacles to life success for young women and prevalent forces in Northeast Tennessee.

1. **Impact:** (Explain how this effort results in **measurable, meaningful, mission-focused change** in the conditions of women's economic advancement in the local community. What condition is the effort designed to address? What is the goal of the effort?)

YWCA Bristol is the only YW in the territory between Roanoke, VA and Knoxville, TN. We serve several counties, with a combined average of 15.67% who live below the poverty line. The average per capita income for individuals in the counties we serve is \$13,786, over \$5000 BELOW federal poverty guidelines. The impact of this economic disparity is multi-faceted, and leads to poor educational opportunities, a higher teen pregnancy rate, and exposure to drugs and poor behavioral tendencies.

The *2010 TDOE (Tennessee Department Of Education) Report Card* the K-8 AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) reports for Math reflect that 22% overall students rank below basic proficiency, 33% of economically disadvantaged student's rank below basic proficiency, and 43% of students with special needs rank below basic proficiency. The Reading and Language reports reflect 6.5% overall students rank below basic proficiency, 11% of economically disadvantaged students rank below basic proficiency and 21% of students with special needs rank below basic proficiency.

Tech GYRLS projects provide a core of STEM learning. This program allows us to empower and cultivate opportunities for these girls through **education in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and positive life skills**. STEM activities will prepare the girls we serve for the challenges and opportunities in today's 21st century economy--not just for careers as a scientist. Most jobs require workers to have a greater ability to think critically, work as a member of a team as well as independently. The *National Science Foundation* estimates that 80% of the jobs created in the next decade will require some form of math and science skills. Engaging and rigorous undergraduate STEM learning provides the foundation for the STEM workforce, for advanced study, for well-prepared K-12 teachers, and for an educated 21st century citizenry.

The *2010 TDOE Report Card* reports that only 91.2% Females graduated in 2009 from Tennessee High School. According to the Summary of Data Prepared by Sullivan County Regional Health Assessment in April 2008, teen pregnancy rates in 2006 continue to be persistently higher (53%) than the *Healthy People 2010 objective* of 43 per 1000 (23%) females between the ages of 15-19 years. The *Tennessee Department of Health* ranks Sullivan County 64th out of

95 in teen pregnancies in the state of Tennessee. *Sullivan County Regional Health Department* believes that interventions through the mode of educational programs targeting young women at risk can help achieve this goal.

Statistics consistently show that girls exposed to a program focusing on girl's issues will reduce the rate of teen pregnancy, thus decreasing their dropout rates, and encouraging better attendance, grades, aspects for higher education and career opportunities.

In 2004 BTCS implemented a survey to identify the risk factors for youth in Bristol. The results showed that the key issues were *transitions & mobility, low neighborhood attachment, family conflict* and *friends who engage in problem behaviors*, as well as the lack of positive activities during after school hours. YWCA Bristol took these findings and determined the need for an after school program for girls that would address these needs.

Our correlating objectives are:

TRANSITIONS AND MOBILITY - focusing on girls who are transitioning at a crucial time in their lives, such as elementary to middle and middle to high school.

LOW NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT- focusing on girls from schools within our direct neighborhood. The YW has NO other program accessible to girls of this age and need.

FAMILY CONFLICT AND FRIENDS THAT ENGAGE IN PROBLEM BEHAVIORS - curriculum is provided to teach young girls how to accept and deal with conflict in an appropriate manner and also provide them with a skill set to handle problems and setbacks for the rest of their life.

POSITIVE EXPOSURE- The afterschool hours of 3:00 to 6:00 pm are well known "danger time" for children. These "at risk" girls need far more than a safe place to spend those hours. They need encouragement in their studies, supervised access to computer and internet resources, tutoring and mentoring, physical exercise and a healthy snack. Many also need transportation to and from the program. Trained caregivers and college/high school mentors meet these needs.

2. Evaluation: (Explain how the **results** of this effort are or will be **measured**)

The short term measurable goal is to assist each girl on an individual basis to, at least, maintain an increase of one grade level, improve behavior, attendance, and set personal goals.

A regular routine for the girls now is to check their *PowerSchool* account where they can track their grades daily which help staff to know in what areas a girl may need tutoring assistance. This web based program enables educators to make timely decisions that impact student performance creating a collaborative environment for parents, teachers and students to work together in maintaining passing grades. Teachers record and maintain the student's updates for homework, tests and projects that will make up their final grade. We are also able to see behavior conduct at school and attendance or tardiness.

Each nine weeks the program is evaluated on the girl's final grades, behavior, attendance, and school and Tech GYRL program performance. The program is assessed by a "star" system. The girls start each semester with a number of stars on their individual charts. Stars can be earned or lost due to behavior and stars are earned for bringing up grades or maintaining grades and acts of kindness. At the end of each 9 weeks the girls cash in their earned stars at the "teen store" which has a large variety of items to select from as their incentives to work on keeping up their grades, attendance in school and appropriate behaviors. The girls love this opportunity to shop! In the fall semester, 2010, one girl increased her grade from 2 F's up to C's and a C up to an A in Math after the YWCA staff spoke with her mom about how to look her grades up on the school website to help her keep up with them. Several other girls have brought up their grades at least one grade level, some two levels! Another girl was-not turning in her homework. Staff initiated a parent/staff/teacher conference at the school to develop a plan and she brought 3 of her grades up. Girls must attend school to be allowed to come to the after school program each day. Several of the girls went from having more than 5 days absent in six weeks to only 1 or 2 days absent the following six weeks. Teachers and counselors report an increase in completed homework, better socialization skills and behaviors. Grades are either maintained or increase significantly.

Tech GYRLS is measured by the program attendance, grade increases, pre and post tests and program evaluations throughout the school year that is documented.

3. Results: (Describe the status of implementation and results thus far. What are the **measurable objectives** for the coming year?)

This program has proven to be exceptionally successful in academic achievement. At the end of each year we tabulate their grades and determine any grade increases. Each year the findings are remarkable. In Math 17 girls made grade increases, the highest was a 21% increase. In Reading 17 girls made grade increases, the highest was a 10% increase. In Science 16 girls made grade increases, the highest was a 23% increase. In Social Studies 14 girls made grade increases, the highest was a 19% increase.

Several of these girls were failing and would not have passed into the next grade had they not been in this program. We believe it has provided a constant structure and routine to their educational growth. Additionally these participants have been able to go on technology ventures and field trips they would not normally be offered to attend. They have visited college campuses to see what opportunities are available to them for their future. They have provided service to others through community projects. Since our program is currently accomodating 5 special education students there is an opportunity for these girls to assist their peers with learning disabilities. They are forming special bonds that they normally may not get in mainstream school.

Through the Tech GYRL Pre and Post knowledge tests we can determine that these girls are learning basic computer skills and how to appropriately navigate the internet. They are learning how to build and program a robot. They are learning how to consider career options and what kind of education they will need to focus on to achieve their career goals.

Our long term goals would be that these girls will choose to volunteer and/or work while they finish school, graduate and take advantage of higher education opportunities. We are confident that they will understand that women can have careers in science, technology, engineering and math by seeing female mentors in a variety of work settings.

If volunteer driven, please estimate the number of volunteer hours devoted to program delivery.

Number of Volunteer Hours Total # volunteers for 2011 was 61 individuals

The program had a total of 28 tutors with 330 homework assistance hours and 33 female mentors in programming who volunteered for the 2010-2011 school year.

Approximately 200 different volunteers are involved in this program, most of them in short term commitments. Many volunteer tutors are students from East Tennessee State University, Emory and Henry College, King College, Virginia Intermont College and Bristol Youth Leadership students from all the area high schools. Mentoring volunteers come from groups such as Blue Stocking Club, musicians from the Symphony of the Mountains, Bristol Tennessee Police Department and the Sullivan County Health Department and other individuals with special talents to share. The Outreach programs are coordinated in collaboration with approximately 25 other programs within the YWCA and agencies, schools, churches, businesses, and volunteer groups outside the YWCA.

Through Tech GYRLS projects and tech ventures the YWCA collaborates with WCYB-TV5, Bristol Motor Speedway, Wellmont Bristol Regional Medical Center, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and WHCB radio station. Through the Volunteer Tennessee Learn and Serve meth free project the Tech GYRLS continue to partner with the National Guard, Sullivan County Health Department, Virginia Intermont College, Bristol Tennessee City Schools, and the Sullivan County Anti Drug coalition and the Children's Advocacy Center.