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Cecilia Terrazas , Sara L. Schwartz & Michael J. Austin

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Girls Incorporated of Alameda County at 50: A Voice for Girls (1958–2008)

CECILIA TERRAZAS, SARA L. SCHWARTZ, and MICHAEL J. AUSTIN
*Mack Center for Nonprofit Management in the Human Services, School of Social Welfare,
University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA*

Girls Incorporated of Alameda County is nonprofit human service organization that has delivered education, counseling, and advocacy services to girls aged 6 to 18 for 50 years. The organization began as a small, local girls club and has grown into a large multi-faceted service delivery organization attached to a national governing body. The history of Girls Incorporated of Alameda County introduces struggles in relation to external and internal factors that altered the way that the agency financed and managed and exemplifies the important role of nonprofit leadership. The organization's many accomplishments have also presented multiple challenges, particularly related to the changing roles of women in American society.

KEYWORDS *Organizational history, nonprofit, girls, advocacy and education*

INTRODUCTION TO GIRLS INCORPORATED OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

Girls Incorporated of Alameda County (GIAC) is a nonprofit human service agency delivering educational, counseling, and advocacy services to girls since 1958. The agency's many accomplishments have come with challenges related to gender discrimination and community resistance to the changing roles of women. The organizational history of GIAC traces its beginnings as a small girls club to its present day status as a large \$6 million multi-

All written and verbal sources used to develop this case study can be found in the Appendix B.

Address correspondence to Michael J. Austin, Mack Center on Nonprofit Management in the Human Services, School of Social Welfare, University of California at Berkeley, 120 Haviland Hall #7400, Berkeley, CA 94720. E-mail: mjaustin@berkeley.edu

service agency delivering comprehensive services to girls 6–18 years. The challenges faced by the organization reflect the strength and determination of its staff and board members. Before describing the organization's history, it is important to note the range of services provided in 2008.

CURRENT GIRLS INC. PROGRAMS

GIAC is an affiliate of the national Girls Inc. organization (headquartered in New York) offering year-round academic enrichment, skill building, and counseling services. GIAC annually serves over 7,000 girls and families at 45 schools and community sites with a mission to help girls reach their full potential, overcome social and cultural barriers specific to females, and empower girls with the strengths, capabilities, and competencies to meet the challenges they face. The tagline of the mission is “to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.”

While GIAC delivers comprehensive services primarily to girls, several programs (health, sexuality, and mental health) also serve boys. In 2003, 85% of the girls served were youth of color, 65% lived in single-family homes, and nearly 30% came from families with less than \$35,000 annual income. Many of the participants attend low-performing and under-funded schools in Oakland, where over half of the students score in the lowest quartile on state standardized tests. The agency delivers programs in the following service areas: (a) literacy, (b) science and math, (c) sports, health, and fitness, (d) computers and technology, (e) leadership, community, and culture, (f) college and career preparation, (g) health and sexuality, (h) personal growth, (i) mental health, and (j) advocacy.

Literacy and Sports

Literacy and sports programs are designed for girls in kindergarten through fifth grades. These programs aim to improve academic readiness and self-esteem. GIRLStart is a four-year after-school literacy program, offered in English and Spanish, which addresses limited reading skills. Watch Out World (WOW) compliments GIRLStart by building confidence to be athletes and leaders.

Science, Math, and Technology

GIAC offers several programs to motivate girls to consider careers in math and science. Eureka! (grades 8–12) is designed to build knowledge and confidence in math, science, technology, and sports. Operation S.M.A.R.T. (Science, Math, and Relevant Technology) is an after-school program offering girls (grades 4–7) an opportunity to see how math, science, and technology

relate to their everyday lives. The All STARS program focuses on middle school (grades 6–8) development in the same three areas.

Leadership, Community, and Culture

The agency uses hands-on strategies designed to encourage girls to examine issues in their lives and communities while inspiring them to develop leadership qualities and cultural awareness. Girls Advocacy Project (GAP) and Latinas y Que (LYQ) help girls sharpen their leaderships skills, explore their diversity, and become community and corporate leaders.

Health and Sexuality

Girls Inc. addresses health and sexuality (ages 8–18) with a comprehensive approach to adolescent reproductive health. High school peer educators under the HEART (Helping Everyone Achieve Respect Together) program explore issues such as depression, decision-making, risk taking, and peer relationships. Age-appropriate workshops address bullying, assertiveness, puberty, self-care, and sexual awareness.

Concordia Park Center

Many of the technology, sports and fitness, and homework assistance programs are located at the Concordia Park Center in Oakland and offer opportunities to enhance academic, technological, and athletic preparation. Programs have included: Build Your Our Computer, Digital Storytelling, and Youth Media to develop information technology knowledge. Sports Chance, Body By Me, Action for Safety, Will Power, Won't Power and a Fitness Center are programs designed to build the capability and confidence to participate in competitive sports and advocate for participants own safety.

Mental Health Services

Located at the GIAC headquarters in San Leandro and in schools throughout the county, the Pathways Counseling Center is an insurance-approved (including Medi-Cal) provider delivering mental health, case management, and consultation services in both Spanish and English to families and individuals.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

GIAC was founded in 1958 by a local women's social service club (Soroptimist Club) in San Leandro that established one of the first girls clubs in

the East Bay. This was during a time when females were denied admission to male organizations. For example, Boys Club of America was founded in 1906 and did not admit girls until the late 1980s. The community supported the Boys Club of San Leandro and many advocated for a similar program for girls. A survey of services in the area identified a lack of programming for girls. Responding to this gap in services, the Soroptimists initiated a fundraising campaign (tea parties, fashion shows, rummage sales, and private contributions) to develop the funds needed to open a girls club.

“Girls are important” was an early motto of the San Leandro Girls Club (SLGC) for serving girls of working mothers aged 6–16 through after-school programs in San Leandro. The Mayor of San Leandro provided a 900 square foot cottage (six small rooms, a basement, garage, and a small yard) situated in Halcyon Park for \$1.00 per year. SLGC opened on October 13, 1958, offering programs for girls after school (Wednesday through Friday) and all day on Saturday. Several hundred girls came in and out of the agency in its first year of operation, with about 20 girls engaging daily in classes on cooking, dancing, ceramics, singing, and acrobatics.

The first Executive Director, Hanne-Marie Halland (1958–1966), was a Norwegian-American resident of Hayward. Halland and a group of volunteers ran programs centered on handicrafts and homemaking by using games and the library. Each girl was assigned a daily chore to keep the house clean and build homemaking skills. Most of the SLGC members lived within walking distance and came and went as they wished. A \$2.00 membership fee was required with opportunities for girls to “earn” their membership by assisting the director.

In 1960 the Soroptimists Club established an 11 member Board of Directors made up of Soroptimists and women from the community. Articles of incorporation for IRS 501(c)(3) status were filed in 1960. The original statement of agency purpose included the following:

The aims and objectives of the agency are to provide a well balanced program of training in homemaking, creativity, cultural enrichment, and character guidance throughout the community, designed and directed to appeal to girls ages six through sixteen. The agency further believes that the needs for this program does not confine itself to any specific social or economic level, but that it can be applied wherever home supervision is deficient or parent–child communication is impaired thereby creating the need for further enrichment of home-like experiences and adult companionship. It is the aim of the program to render services to supplement the home, the school, and other agencies of similar purpose in the areas which will help in developing young women of ability and character in the community. (The Council of Social Planning, 1962)

Although the program was available to girls aged 6–16 with no racial or economic restrictions, a 1960 survey revealed that SLGC was a primarily

white, middle-class organization with a relatively small number of girls of color, and most of the participants were 8–12 years old.

GCSL became an affiliate of the national Girls Club of America (GCA) in 1960. The national GCA grew out of the Industrial Revolution when young girls moved from farms to work in the New England mill towns. The first GCA was established in 1864 in Waterbury, Connecticut and offered programs not only for the working girls, but also for their daughters. Becoming an affiliate of GCA allowed the SLGC to benefit from national publicity, assistance, and staff training. GCA, while exerting no control over SLGC, required the local club to possess a facility for girls and a full-time staff person to represent membership in the national organization.

Over the next decade, SLGC struggled financially and opened, closed, and re-opened, depending on the availability of resources. The first executive director was the only paid staff for many years, often compensated with personal checks from the Board. SLGC sought funding from the United Crusade (precursor to the United Way of the Bay Area) in 1961, but did not receive funds until the 1970s. The Bing Crosby Foundation provided the first grant in 1967 to purchase equipment to set up a beauty shop to provide girls with training in cosmetology. The Kiwanis Club helped SLGC launch a capital campaign to build a multi-purpose addition to the Halcyon house in 1972 to allow for program expansion.

After 10 years of operation, board struggles intensified among members who were Soroptimists and those who were not; in essence, some held more traditional views and others more liberal views about women's issues and civil rights. The more liberal members wanted to introduce programming related to the taboo subjects (at the time) of health and sexuality. In the early 1970s, programming was based entirely on the availability and knowledge of SLGC volunteers who taught classes a few times a week. In the midst of these tensions, the Board hired Executive Director Barbara Dyer.

AN ERA OF CHANGE (1972–1977)

Barbara Dyer brought dramatic changes to the SLGC. Before Dyer, there had been six executive directors since Halland's departure in 1966 and the organization had been managed by volunteers, had no staff, no grant money, and limited funds from donors and community organizations. Under Dyer's leadership, SLGC grew from one employee to six upon her exit in 1977. Dyer turned a "volunteer enterprise into a professional enterprise." She expanded services and grew the budget from \$10,000 in 1972 to \$160,000 in 1977.

Dyer met with community leaders to develop programs for girls based on changing community needs. Meetings with the Police Department and the San Leandro Unified School District led to a program for delinquent girls who were housed in Snedigar Cottage as wards of the court, had been

removed from home, and those who were “601 status offenders” (e.g., any person under the age of 18 who habitually disobeyed their parents, was truant from school, and engaged in other status offenses such as being incorrigible). Incorrigibility was used as justification for police to pick-up teens that were out after parental curfews and take them to Snedigar. These youth could be made wards of Juvenile Court for one offense. Out of concern for the numbers of youth in detention facilities who had never committed a crime, Dyer involved herself in advocacy for what became known as the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) that began in 1974 through a grant under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) to improve youth delinquency programs and ensure that children had no contact with adults in jail. The program required that status offenders receive community-based services that offered counseling, mentoring, education, and job training. SLGC was chosen to be a mental health treatment provider in San Leandro, and also began to serve boys.

With help from the San Francisco Foundation, SLGC’s Snedigar Cottage program offered recreational activities and later expanded into the Phoenix Program that offered counseling and career development designed to increase self-esteem. In 1976, the program received a National Juvenile Justice Program award as the first Girls Club to work with girls in the juvenile justice system, giving SLGC national recognition. Through this program, SLGC transitioned from the daycare program of the 1960s to the after-school programs of the 1970s and beyond.

All of SLGC’s programs were made possible by Dyer’s ability to secure the agency’s first large foundation grant from the San Francisco Foundation, local government funding, and United Way funds. The struggle for United Way funds in the early 1970s was an important milestone for the agency. After being denied funds for political reasons, Dyer campaigned to acquire United Way funds that would eventually match the annual allocation of the Boys Club of San Leandro. Dyer helped the United Way change their thinking about the SLGC by meeting one-on-one with the CEO’s of companies that donated money to the United Way. In these meetings and board-hosted events, the CEOs were educated about the inequity of funding for girls programs and were invited to become involved in SLGC. As a result, a group of companies threatened to withdraw funding from the United Way in the amount equal to the Boys Clubs that they wanted allocated to the SLGC. This hard won battle secured beginning funding from the United Way and gave SLGC recognition and credibility.

As SLGC grew, so did the needs of the organization. To accommodate a growing need for office and programming space, a trailer was installed at the Halcyon site in 1976. SLGC secured its first van in 1976, with support from the Kiwanis Club. This helped the agency transport girls from around the area to the Girls Club, allowing the organization to expand membership to girls living in other parts of the city.

SLGC grew out of a small suburban community not far from a major urban center and was governed by homemakers who reflected traditional values on the role of women in society. At the end of Dyer's term as executive director in 1977, SLGC remained a grassroots agency whose main fundraising activity was an annual tea. Nonetheless, it was clear that Dyer's leadership had transformed SLGC and laid the groundwork for the next director to develop SLGC into the organization that it is today.

A DECADE OF STRUGGLE (1977–1987)

When Patricia Loomes¹ was hired as the Executive Director in 1977, no one was prepared for the energetic and forceful woman who would propel the agency into new arenas of funding and programming. This did not come without challenges and in the first 10 years of Loomes' 30-year tenure as executive director she faced both financial and political challenges.

From the beginning, Loomes struggled with the Board over ideological differences. In 1977, SLGC was still a small agency with a budget of \$160,000 and a 12-member board comprised of homemakers, teachers, businesswomen, and a few men. The staff consisted of Executive Director Loomes, a counselor, a part-time secretary, and a few seasonal staff. As an inexperienced executive director, Loomes was unprepared for board meetings that "were slightly terrifying," based in part on the split among board members between those with conservative and liberal philosophies about women's issues.

The Board had been a "hands on" board that was instrumental in managing the daily business. As the agency grew and acquired new staff, some members had difficulty letting go of their prior roles. Given Loomes' inexperience with boards, their "micromanaging drove her crazy," with questions like "Why does the kitchen always look so dirty?" or "Why did you pursue that grant?" Many board members were accustomed to wandering into the agency unannounced. As Loomes began to build a program that was different from the traditional GCA, board members who did not agree with the new direction resigned from the board. In time, the Board became more focused on fundraising and governance and less on daily operations.

Racism in San Leandro

The SLGC emerged within the context of a racial divide. Suburban San Leandro was a small town bordering urban Oakland and had a history of racism. When the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held hearings in 1967, the mayor testified that housing and job discrimination existed in the City of San Leandro (San Leandro Bytes, 1967). A 1971 CBS documentary noted that the city had made a concentrated effort to keep itself white. While neigh-

boring Oakland had a flourishing black community in 1970, San Leandro had 85 African-American residents. Later that year, the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing called San Leandro a racist bastion of white supremacy.

This racism was reflected in the agency as it struggled to serve youth of color, especially when SLGC expanded to serve minority girls outside of San Leandro. Complaints from City Hall referred to loud African-American girls on the streets of San Leandro. Similarly, the African-American secretary at the Girls Club was asked, on occasion, by board members if she was available to clean their homes. Despite this racism, Loomes continued to service youth of color.

Fundraising

Throughout the first 10 years of Loomes' tenure, there were major changes in the Board and the agency's funding streams. With the passing of Proposition 13 in 1978 (statewide taxpayers revolt that led to a permanent reduction in local property taxes), SLGC's contracts with the City of San Leandro were cut, resulting in staff layoffs. The agency continued to seek public support and acquired grants from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and the Department of Labor (DOL) to expand programming. As the Reagan Administration reduced these funds, in 1982 SLGC began to diversify its funding to support its \$350,000 budget.

It was increasingly clear that the Board needed to become more engaged in fundraising. The expected annual board member contribution was raised and a board trainer helped the Board learn how to solicit donors and recruit members. Board members who disagreed with the new required annual contribution resigned. In 1984 five board members were replaced with well-connected people who were instrumental in recruiting new members. With a stronger board, the SLGC raised \$50,000 in 1985 and their annual campaign contributed 10% of the annual budget of \$500,000 (see Appendix A).

The struggles with the United Way continued in the 1980s, as SLGC received \$9,000 a year compared to the \$40,000 received by the Boys Club. Loomes joined a small group of girl's and women's organizations and took the lead in mounting a campaign to acquire equal funding. When the group discovered that the inequity of funding between boys and girls for all United Way supported programs equaled \$1 million, they held multiple meetings with the United Way President and Loomes sent him a letter every week. This lobbying led to increased funding for girls organizations in the Bay Area and by 1987, the United Way was allocating \$130,000 a year to the SLGC (the same amount as the Boys Club's allotment). Based on this success, Loomes became a United Way volunteer and built important community relationships.

Judy Glenn joined the organization in 1978 as a part-time secretary while still in college and played a pivotal role in the development of SLGC. Upon graduation in the early 1980s, she moved into the newly created fund development position. Her first responsibilities were to raise money through foundations and build a donor base. Under her leadership, the organization moved away from small labor-intensive social events to an annual giving campaign and developed a donor base to provide unrestricted funds. While Glenn's position changed over the years, she was pivotal in assisting Loomes with the management and growth of the agency, later becoming associate executive director and today chief operating officer.

First Annual Campaign

The 1984 Olympic Games (held in Los Angeles) was instrumental in SLGC's first annual campaign. The president of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) led the first privately funded and organized Olympics. To generate American interest, he organized a cross-country torch run that covered 33 states and 9,000 miles in 82 days. The "Youth Legacy Kilometer" was organized to raise money for youth sporting programs, in particular the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Individuals and groups could donate \$1,000 to carry the torch that raised \$11 million nationwide. As the torch relay was routed through San Leandro, SLGC used the event to launch a fundraising campaign that attracted donors interested in carrying the torch. This sparked the interest of several local donors who each gave \$1,000 to run in the relay in order to support the Olympics and SLGC.

While the first annual campaign in 1984 reached its goal of \$20,000, it was the 1985 campaign that really gained momentum. William Brooks, a local real estate agent, was one of the donors who ran in the Olympic torch relay. He became involved with the SLGC and chaired the first annual campaign that had a goal of \$50,000. Brooks agreed to match every gift, up to \$5,000 in the campaign and encouraged every board member to donate \$1,000. Brooks' generous donation motivated the board and they exceeded the goal by raising \$60,000 that year. This was the beginning of a campaign that continues today (over \$3.6 million raised in 2007).

New Programming

While Dyer set the framework for expansion, Loomes pushed programming forward. One year after her arrival, in 1978, Pathways Counseling Center was established to provide mental health services for youth and families, becoming the first GCA affiliate to do so. This program grew out of the counseling services provided through the Phoenix Program. By 1980, SLGC leased a trailer from the San Leandro Unified School District to house the counseling center at John Muir School.

In the early 1980s, based on stories reported to the staff and a statewide conference on sexual abuse, the agency began to respond to the existence of sexual abuse among youth. Loomes sought funding from the City of San Leandro and the United Way to hire therapists and trainers to help staff identify and serve youth who had been abused. In 1983, the Pathways Counseling Center began a sexual abuse treatment program that provided groups for teens (girls and boys) who were survivors of sexual abuse.

Other programs were established during the 1980s that expanded the range of programming. The Skillbuilders program, funded by a DOL grant, introduced girls to non-traditional careers such as plumbing, electricity, and home improvement. Project Mainstream enabled girls with disabilities to fully participate in the SLGC's programs. A pregnant teen and teen parent program was established in 1986 and expanded services into southern Alameda County that won the innovative programming award from the national GCA.

A DECADE OF CHANGE AND EXPANSION (1987–1997)

Loomes's second decade was a time of growth and change for the SLGC. The budget grew to \$1.5 million in 1997 and reflected approximately 50% government funding and 50% foundation and fundraising resources. Government funds supported teen pregnancy prevention, child abuse prevention, and adolescent mental health services. The mental health services provided by Pathways Counseling Center on a fee-for-service model and by the mid-1990s represented nearly one-third of the agency budget (over \$400,000 per year).

It was the 1986 strategic plan that set the direction for Loomes's second decade of leadership. The plan identified six goals for the five years period (1986–1991): (1) obtain a larger facility for programs and staff, (2) develop and maintain diverse funding streams, (3) expand programs, (4) recruit high quality and culturally diverse personnel, (5) expand the community awareness and advocacy for girls, and (6) recruit diverse board members with various capacities and characteristics to assist the agency.

As the agency expanded programmatically, additional space was needed to house both staff and programs. Within the previous five years, the organization had grown from 7 to 16 employees with an annual budget that had more than doubled from \$200,000 in 1981 to \$500,000 in 1987. The new programs included counseling to victims of sexual abuse, support services to pregnant teens/teen parents, and a career mentorship program. To address the overcrowding of staff and programs, the Club House Halcyon Park was renovated and the William Brooks building in San Leandro was leased in 1987. The rental of the Brooks building put pressure on the agency and its board to find a permanent home for SLGC. After several years of

failed attempts at finding a suitable location, the agency sought outside help.

Unsure about the merits of new construction in contrast to renovating the existing building, an architect was hired in 1988. That same year, they contracted with FRA Inc., a fundraising consultant, to do a feasibility study to assess the community and the organization's readiness for a campaign. While SLGC had a limited community profile, FRA found that the quality of the programs could attract major donors to a capital campaign. FRA proceeded with the development of a campaign plan by working closely with the organization, including assistance in searching for a new building.

The agency spent nearly five years searching due to many obstacles. SLGC finally found its current site on 14th Street in San Leandro that offered ample parking, accessibility to public transport lines, 13,000 square feet of space, and a location across the street from San Leandro High School. The SLGC took the earnings from its Schafer Trust endowment for the down payment of nearly \$300,000 and moved into a new building in 1991.

After settling into the new building, SLGC initiated a capital campaign to renovate the site. In 1993, they hired ENDOW to develop a campaign that focused on a goal of \$1.4 million needed to cover the costs for renovations and the purchase of the building. Over \$600,000 was raised in the first phase of the campaign (\$70,000 from donors, \$200,000 from the City of San Leandro, nearly \$60,000 from the board and staff of SLGC and the \$300,000 donation by the Schafer Trust). The second phase raised over \$800,000 by 1995. The campaign exceeded its goal of \$1.4 million and allowed the agency to not only complete renovations but also to reduce the mortgage.

Several issues led to the closure of the Halcyon Park site (SLGC's home for 33 years). Since its beginnings, the goal of serving girls of working parents led some to view the agency as a childcare facility. In 1990, the state agreed and required a day care license in order to continue operation. SLGC opted not to seek licensure and in 1991 terminated the program that was serving about 30–50 girls. While the decision was difficult, the funds were used more effectively to support other programming, especially the agency's in-school programs.

When SLGC moved into its new building, it did so with a new motto and a new name. In 1990, the national GCA changed its name to Girls Incorporated (Girls Inc.). With the name change came a new motto ("growing up is serious business"). The SLGC agreed to adopt the change in 1990 and became Girls Incorporated of San Leandro, and in 1994 became Girls Incorporated of Alameda County. The agency felt positive about the name change as it sounded more professional and used this opportunity to distinguish itself from the old public perception of recreational programming. Loomes wrote editorials to the local newspaper to seize the opportunity to raise the profile of the agency.

Program Expansion

The national Girls Inc. provided its chapters with assistance in developing researched-based programs that would ultimately alter the direction of GIAC (away from recreation or childcare and towards informal education). National interests were shifting as well and greater attention was being given to math and science for girls, based on the recognition of a growing disparity between boys and girls in math and science achievement. GIAC was awarded a Walter S. Johnson Foundation grant for \$120,000 per year for a girl's math and science program called Eureka. In 1990, with funding from the National Science Foundation, GIAC was selected as a model site for the SMART program aimed at exposing girls to the math and science fields.

Loomes continued to monitor the issues facing girls and tried to respond. As the national interest in teen pregnancy grew, GIAC received funding from the state to develop the Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy (PAP) program in San Leandro schools. The School Aged Mother (SAM) program was a similar school-based program for pregnant teens supported by the Alameda County School District with a day care for infants and toddlers operated by Head Start. GIAC housed the project and provided the overall support services with an annual budget of \$200,000. The SAM program offered case management, prenatal, and childbirth support services.

GIAC in 1990

The 1986 strategic plan was updated in 1990 with a new set of goals related to image and the changing ethnic composition of the community. The Public Relations Committee of the Board identified the need to increase their visibility and community understanding of the agency. They also urged the organization to respond to the demographic changes in the area. The enrollment in the San Leandro Unified School district in 1990 reflected a dramatic change from the days in 1958 when the agency was founded. While GIAC was serving a more diverse population, the staff and board did not reflect this diversity. To address these issues, the Board sought to increase the community's understanding of its mission and increase the diversity of the board, staff, clients, and donors.

Fundraising

Since their first annual campaign in 1984, GIAC had been able to increase and meet its annual fundraising goals. By 1987, the campaign continued to surpass its goal and raised \$90,000 (with the help of a \$21,000 dollar gift provided by the Sara Lee Corp.) and \$100,000 in 1988 that included the donation of a van by the Valley Foundation. The campaigns became more sophisticated as the donor base increased. The "Women of Taste" event

began in 1992 as one of the main annual social events of the organization. This event required spending money to make money in order to increase the visibility of the agency in the context of a wine and food-tasting event that was designed to bring people back each year. The first year the event was called “Women Chefs on Parade” and it was a big success. Over 400 people attended and the event grossed \$12,000 (netting \$5,000) in the first year. As the event grew and required more space, it was moved to the Oakland Museum of California in 2007 and netted \$150,000.

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES AND THE EXPANSION INTO OAKLAND (1997–2007)

Strategic Plan of 1999–2003

The 1999 strategic plan provided the focus of the organization during the third decade of Pat Loomes’s tenure. In 1997, GIAC identified service gaps that led to the design of a continuum of services for girls of all ages. The strategic plan included five goals: (1) to be recognized as a premier girls organization in the Bay Area, (2) to become a \$5 million dollar agency by 2000, (3) to empower and serve more girls by reaching new populations, (4) to have a board that reflects the changing needs of the organization, and (5) to have a pool of committed, knowledgeable, and well managed volunteers. While the \$5 million goal by 2000 seemed unreachable, the agency had the capability to reach financial growth goals. From 1996–1998, the budget grew from \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million with a fundraising increase of 23%.

In 1999 the Hass Jr. Fund awarded \$30,000 to GIAC to hire a consultant to help the organization become a premier agency in the Bay Area. Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) was contracted to perform a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis related to potential program and geographical expansion. In 1999 the annual budget was \$1.5 million, staff had grown from 16 in 1988 to 30 in 1999, including 5 administrators. Due to the rapid growth, 25% of staff had been with GIAC less than a year. Most of the older staff were white women, while new staff were primarily women of color. Although the agency’s by-laws allowed for 25 board members, there were only 14 members who were primarily white women (a few people of color) and had been with SLGC over five years.

FTA identified several areas for building a continuum of services that included creating programs to fill the age-related gaps, offering more services outside of San Leandro, and focusing on high-need, low-income girls. GIAC had programs for the early elementary school years and the high school years but nothing for the late elementary years (3rd–5th grades) or the middle school years (6th–8th grades) and only reached some of the girls in need of

services. Establishing “satellite” locations in cities adjacent to San Leandro was seen as a way to strengthen its ties to community leaders and expand its services.

The second goal in the strategic plan was to enhance the youth development component of the new mission of GIAC that was adopted in 1998, namely, “to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.” Youth development was embedded in the programs of the national Girls Inc. agency but, as one staff member put it, “we didn’t have the words for it then.” The third goal was to design, implement, and institutionalize a process to gather and disseminate information about the needs of girls in Alameda County. While the national Girls Inc. was engaged in research and advocacy, the local agencies had not made it a focus and GIAC spent most of its resources on service delivery. Furthermore, little gender-specific information on girls in the county existed; therefore, becoming a repository of this information that could strengthen GIAC by informing programming decisions, impacting local policy development, and increasing their visibility.

Establishing the Continuum and Expanding into Oakland

Expanding services into areas adjacent to San Leandro was one of the first goals to be realized. Pathways expanded in 2000 when the center received a five month grant for school-based counseling in two Oakland schools and extended several of its programs into Oakland. The agency also recruited for Eureka in five middle schools in East Oakland and two in San Leandro. GIRLStart opened a second site in East Oakland at Lockwood Elementary. Through these expansion efforts, GIAC successfully broadened its geographical service area. GIAC’s campaign to build relationships in Oakland lead to a project that enabled the agency to move into the research and advocacy arena. Loomes and FTA met the heads of the Alameda County human services, chief of probation and the health department. The group identified a need for coordinated information sharing and distributing. This meeting lead to the establishment of the Girls Research Project, in which GIAC was at the forefront of gathering information on girls in Alameda County.

The Girls Research Project, later to be known as the Girls Advocacy Project (GAP), was established to assess the status of girls in Alameda County. GIAC initially hoped to gather information from about 1,000 participants, but upon completion of the project had surveyed nearly 2,000 girls. The project was a youth-lead research and advocacy effort to survey girls in East Bay high schools. While there were problems getting authorization from the school and parents, 11 high schools in San Leandro, Oakland, and Berkeley were surveyed on issues related to health, education, mental health, substance abuse, safety, and peer and family relationships. Leadership Teams were

established with girls from each of the high schools who were trained to conduct interviews with about 100 girls to gather qualitative data.

By 2005, GIAC had made much progress on achieving its goals. With the launching of All STARS, a program for middle school girls, the organization completed the continuum of service program model. All girls from 6–18 were now provided continued quality services through GIAC in both San Leandro and Oakland. With regard to positioning GIAC as an expert on girls, the organization had published the results of the GAP and hosted a health conference for girls in the East Bay. After implementation of the strategic plan, GIAC had a budget of over \$4 million and had succeeded in expanding its services outside San Leandro.

In a further effort to expand services into Oakland, in 2005 the Board focused on acquiring a new facility at Concordia Park in East Oakland to provide services in the areas of technology, academic, health, and fitness for 150 middle school girls. A capital campaign was launched to raise funds to make infrastructure improvements and the successful campaign raised \$680,000 that allowed staff to use the building in 2006.

In 2007 GIAC began the process of moving from its San Leandro site-based operation in a few buildings to school-based after-school programming. The agency was encouraged by California Proposition 49 that funded no-cost, accessible, and school-based after-school programs for low-income children and their families. This new form of funding, along with funding from the federal No Child Left Behind program and the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, provided contracts that encouraged GIAC to re-focus its site-based resources. Furthermore, many girls had a hard time getting to GIAC headquarters in San Leandro and more girls could be served if resources were delivered in schools. While many of the programs were already in schools, moving away from a facility-based site represented a major culture shift for GIAC staff who had formed many close relationships with their participants and programs, especially those in programs that would be eliminated. While these changes were difficult for the agency, several staff members believed that it was the right thing to do.

A Generous Donation

As GIAC programs were growing, it was clear that the organization did not have the resources to implement a continuum of service philosophy that would fill in the gaps in service. After moving into the new building in the early 1990s, the agency began a capital campaign of \$1.8 million to accommodate program and staffing needs. One of the donors helped GIAC make contact with a donor, known as Orinda Trust, who owned a local building materials company. While the donor did not have a high profile and was not well known, one of the board members wrote the owner a letter describing the capital campaign. The donor was intrigued

and called to make an appointment to visit the agency. As Pat Loomes and Judy Glenn walked him around the building and pointed out things that they hoped to change, he stopped them in the middle of the corridor, after about ten minutes of touring the building and said, "OK. How much do you want?" Surprised, Loomes replied, "You can't ask us that question as we are just getting to know each other. This is a process." While the donor was not interested in funding a capital project, he asked about a program in need of funds. As a result he contributed \$10,000 to a leadership program for teen girls. GIAC had never received a gift of that size and for several years the donor funded this program, each year with a larger and larger gift.

The Orinda Trust donation pushed the organization into a new era of fundraising. The donor was particularly interested in young children and proposed in 1999, that if GIAC could develop a program for very young girls, he would fund it. At one San Leandro school the principal had been reporting that many first graders were reading below grade level and had classroom management problems. Based on this need and the interest of the funder, GIAC developed a literacy program (GIRLStart) for first and second graders funded by the Orinda Trust at \$200,000 per year. In subsequent years, the funder wanted to expand the program to serve more at-risk girls and increased funding to \$400,000 in 2000 and \$500,000 in 2001.

The business plan of 2003 was the impetus for the most generous donation given to GIAC by the Orinda Trust. GIAC was looking to cost out its specific program expansion ideas and went to the Orinda Trust with a business plan to ask for \$35,000 for program evaluation, which was part of a \$2 million investment in filling all the gaps in service. Out of that meeting, the donor offered to make GIAC a five-year gift of \$10 million to address the entire plan at the rate of \$2 million per year (2003–2008). Never had the organization received such a generous donation and it represented more than half of the GIAC 2003 annual budget!

The Orinda Trust enabled GIAC to create a continuum of comprehensive services for girls from kindergarten through 12th grade. The donation provided for the expansion of GIRLStart to Oakland and enabled the agency to develop WOW, a program for girls in grades 3–5, and All STARS for middle school ages. These donor designated funds focused primarily on programming and staffing support. The funder wanted to see both educational enrichment services and documented results. The gift allowed GIAC to increase staff and bring in reading experts, staff training, educational materials, and the establishment of a senior level fundraising position to increase fundraising.

There is no doubt that the Orinda Trust had a huge impact on the agency and the direction of programming as the donor became a partner with the organization in leadership based on his deep respect for the staff

and board. Through increased fundraising and grant-writing efforts, the major gift went from being 66% of the budget in 2003 to 30% in 2008. While such a large gift is a blessing, it also puts the agency in the position of needing to raise more money so that they are not as dependent on one donor. The benefactor understands the need for GIAC to diversify its funding and has assisted with fund development by organizing sixty of the donor's closest friends into an advisory committee that brings in approximately \$300,000 a year.

Infrastructure Changes

While GIAC has grown rapidly over the past two decades, it has not developed the infrastructure needed to support that growth. The staff has grown from 16 in 1987 to 53 in 2003 and 95 in 2007. Traditionally the organization hired staff as the programs expanded; however, it was only in 2003 that the organization began to hire additional management support to provide oversight. In 1997 the agency's structure was revised to include an associate executive director position and the internal structure of programming changed in 2000 to include program directors who reported to the associate executive director. In addition, the new business plan of 2003 acknowledged the need for leadership succession planning in order to plan for the day that the executive director and associate executive director would retire.

In order to anticipate the time that Loomes and Glenn would leave, the senior management team was expanded to include the executive director, associate executive director, chief operating officer, chief development officer, and chief mental health officer. While this change took place, reallocating decision-making power proved to be more difficult and time consuming.

Changes to the Board of Directors

Since its early years, the board has struggled to be responsive to the changing needs of the agency. From a group of local white women to one composed of professional and prominent women with different ethnicities and areas of expertise, the board has changed dramatically from grappling with day-to-day operations related to keeping the agency running to the increased use of committees to examine and re-examine their roles and responsibilities. While struggling to maintain demographic diversity, the board has become more selective about bringing expertise to the agency. Today, the board includes about 50% women of color, one male, and representation from a variety of professions and individuals who reside in different areas of the county.

The governance role has also changed as the organization has become more professionalized. The current approach of board governance involves setting the policies of the organization in relation to the board's fiscal and

legal responsibilities. Fundraising is a major focus, along with board development related to fundraising and clarification on roles and responsibilities. Based on the past practice of the no term limits for board members, today the Board has a two-year rotating schedule where members leave to allow for new members to govern the agency.

Leadership Transition

Pat Loomes served as the Executive Director of GIAC for 30 years. Her leadership enabled the organization to grow from a grassroots agency (funded by local services clubs and small donations) to a professionalized multimillion-dollar organization. Throughout Loomes' tenure, she made strong alliances with the community and in the political arena. She gained recognition for her devotion to girls' issues and was presented with various awards including: the Navigator Award for Model Leadership, the Award of Excellence from the Management Center, the Local Hero Award from KQED and was designated as "Women of the Year" in the 10th Senate District in 2007 by Congresswomen Corbet.

In anticipation of Loomes' retirement, various steps were taken to assure a successful transition. Planning for her 2007 retirement began in 2003 with the creation of the senior management team. In 2005, an 18-month transition plan supported by a three-year capacity-building grant from the Hass Jr. Foundation of San Francisco helped the Board Executive Committee develop a leadership transition plan.

On October 1, 2007, Linda Boessenecker (formerly Chief Operating Officer at Girl Scouts of San Francisco Bay Area) became the new Executive Director of GIAC. With 13 years as a leader of Girl Scout councils and 22 years as a professional in the Girl Scout movement in Northern California, Boessenecker came to GIAC as a strong, vocal, advocate of the benefits of services for girls. Even though there were many changes in organizational processes and culture, Executive Director Boessenecker's transition has been seamless and has resulted in no loss of staff. Boessenecker's approach during the change process was to use an Appreciate Inquiry technique in which the four D's (Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver) were used to assess the organization, gather recommendations, design an implementation plan, and develop management systems. Staff members were engaged in the process and understood why some of the changes were taking place. One of the most important elements of the change process, according to Boessenecker, was to "respect the past."

Strategic Plan 2007–2010

The strategic plan was updated in 2007 to address the leadership transition and the progress made to date. The Flexible Leadership award program

given to GIAC by the Haas Jr. Fund also supported the updated 2007–2010 strategic plan. The five strategies outlined were similar to the original 1999 plan to: (1) serve the girls most in need, (2) maintain behavioral and mental health service, (3) ensure that GIAC is viewed as an expert on girls issues, (4) develop financial resources of GIAC to sustain the growth of the organization, and (5) create organizational infrastructure that support the organization.

Some of the key components of the plan are to strengthen the board, create a stable infrastructure, and expand public relations. Haas consultants have supported the development the Board and in the first nine months since the transition—the board has expanded from 9 to 16 members. The diversity of the staff and the board continue to be an area of focus for GIAC. A senior marketing strategist will be hired to take the agency to a new level of public awareness. A key element of the strategic plan is to develop the organization's infrastructure to support future growth. The strategic plan calls for increasing staff by 15%, building an annual staff development plan, and expanding the use of technology.

Future Challenges

“Quality, quantity, and funding,” according to Boessenecker, are the major challenges facing GIAC. In the current budget crisis (2008) in California, GIAC is expecting 10%–15% cuts in governments contracts. While government funding represents only 33% of GIAC budget, revenue deficits will need to be addressed by diversifying funding in order to maintain the quality of programs. The current physical capacity of GIAC headquarters is another area of concern because it is too small for the staff of 102. Walking though the currently cramped quarters of the organization confirms this need.

CONCLUSION

GIAC is a pioneering Bay Area human service organization that has struggled and persevered throughout its 50-year history. Started as a grassroots club by local women in San Leandro, it has grown into a professional organization of over 100 staff members. As the organization expanded, the scope of its programming changed dramatically. It began as a recreational club teaching cooking and sewing and grew to become an organization that promotes the development of a diverse group of girls by building on their strengths, interests, and talents. It has clearly responded to changing needs and built a reputation for quality and responsive services.

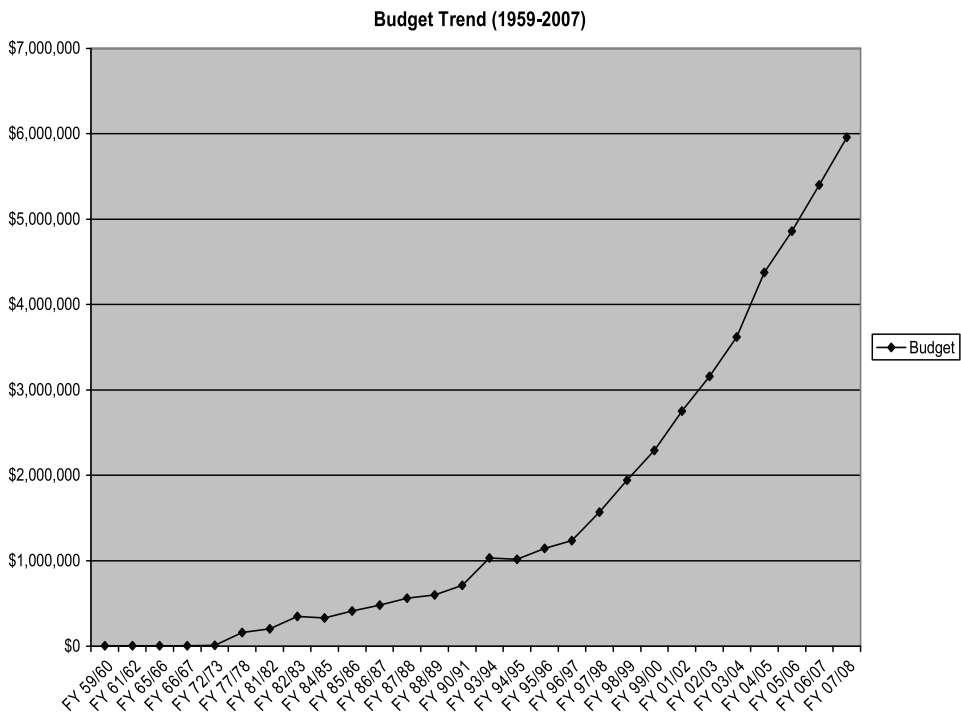
Leadership has been an important component of the agency's success. Executive Directors Dyer and Loomes were instrumental in propelling the

organization beyond conventional programming into new service areas that challenged the status quo and engaged girls in new areas of interest. While confronting challenges over time, the dedicated staff and board members have helped the organization grow. As one old-timer noted, “We always had really great people.” Through hard work and strong leadership, GIAC in 2008 delivers high quality programs to over 7,000 girls and families, in 45 schools all around Alameda County, that inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

NOTE

1. Before coming to GIAC, Pat Loomes began her life in the United States in New York City. Loomes emigrated from Ireland in 1963, and while living in New York City attended the University of Connecticut to receive a degree in Sociology. Several years later, Loomes moved to the Bay Area to acquire a Master’s Degree from San Francisco State University. She volunteered at the Berkeley Women’s Center, which eventually lead to a paid position as the Executive Director. It was not until 1977 that Loomes entered GIAC to begin her journey as executive director.

APPENDIX A: BUDGET TREND LINE



APPENDIX B: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Interviews

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Alice Sarafian | Joetta Malkasian | Patricia Larson |
| Barbara Dyer | Judy Glenn | Patricia Loomes |
| Barbara Miller | Carla Koren | Rebecca Cannon |
| Jachyn Davis | Linda Boessenecker | |
| Janelle Cavanaugh | Lynn Richards | |

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