Vermont Works for Women celebrates 20th anniversary of Rosie’s Girls camps

Vermont Business Magazine Vermont Works for Women (VWW) is celebrating 20 years of its Rosie’s Girls camps for middle school girls and gender non-conforming youth. Rosie’s Girls is a series of one week carpentry and welding summer day camps that use math, science, and power tools to transform girls’ ideas of what they are capable of and inspire them to dream big and thrive in all aspects of their lives. Press is invited to make arrangements to attend Rosie’s Girls Weld August 19-23 at Burlington Technical Center, and/or Rosie’s Girls Build August 12-16 at Northfield Middle High School.
Over the last 20 years, Rosie’s Girls has provided close to 1,000 youth in Vermont with the opportunity to recognize their potential and eschew stereotypes that potentially hold them back. The message and delivery model of Rosie’s Girls has attracted national attention, with seven sites from Ohio to California running Rosie’s Girls camps based on the VWW program. This fall, VWW will expand Rosie’s Girls with after school offerings at targeted Vermont middle schools. Twenty years in, demand continues to grow.

“Rosie’s Girls creates space that is safe and brave for all, whether campers are questioning gender stereotypes for the first time or mastering power tools they never thought they could use. The transformation in our campers throughout the week is palpable as the possibilities for themselves and their lives become limitless,” said Nell Carpenter, Rosie’s Girls Program Coordinator.

Rosie’s Girls teaches trades and STEAM skills to 11-14 year olds, but the goal is not to create the next generation of tradeswomen or engineers (although they represent an untapped opportunity for women to earn a high-wage in high-demand lines of work). Rather, the goal is to create the lived experience of toppling a gender stereotype, to acknowledge and celebrate the power in doing so, and to awaken recognition of how, if stereotypes are accepted as fact, we may close doors to amazing opportunities before even looking through them. Through the Rosie’s Girls programs, what was once viewed as the domain of boys is exposed to be equally the domain of girls and those outside the gender binary.

“If you give a girl a power tool... initially, there may be amazement at being invited to use a table saw, or a power drill, or a welder. Then comes the thrill (and perhaps a touch of fear?) at the first encounter with the noise and power of the tool in their hands. Then, whether after the first try, or after a week of using the tools to build and create, comes the realization, ‘Oh, I can SO do this! If you give a girl a power tool... you get feedback like, ‘it makes you feel confident,’ ‘you learn new things about yourself,’ and ‘don’t be afraid of the sparks!’ If you give a girl a power tool... the confidence and knowledge she gains broadens her horizons and uniquely informs how she navigates her future, in a world likely to remain rife with bias.” wrote Vermont Works for Women Executive Director Jen Oldham in a recent commentary about the sustaining impact of the Rosie’s Girls program in VTDigger.

In the U.S., Title IX legislates equal access to educational opportunities regardless of gender, and Equal Opportunity laws exist to counter discrimination in the workplace. Unfortunately, these laws alone don’t reverse centuries of cultural norms that perpetuate stereotypes and occupational segregation. While in the last seventy years women’s educational attainment and participation in the labor force has increased to near parity with men, their occupational choices have seen far less change.

Women continue to make up the majority of workers in lower-paying jobs and sectors such as child care, social work, education, and administrative staff positions, while men make up a disproportionate number of workers in higher-paying jobs and fields such as finance, technology, the trades, and in senior management positions. According to Change The Story’s 2016 Status Report “Where Vermont Women Work and Why it Matters”, nearly half of women working full-time continue to be employed in the same occupations in which they worked 40 years ago.

Occupational segregation contributes to a lifetime of increased financial vulnerability. For girls to choose career paths in fields considered “non-traditional” for their gender, they need role models and mentors to show them the way. The lack of women in higher-paying, male-dominated fields limits girls’ exposure and access to these fields, perpetuating the segregation and reinforcing the gender stereotypes. For 20 years, Rosie’s Girls has been instrumental in disrupting this cycle and creating new opportunities for all.
investing in girls to empower the next generation; and advocating for large-scale culture change for women and girls. Learn more at vtworksforwomen.org.

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Vermont Technical College
Continuing Education: CBD & Greenhouse Cash Crop Certificate
Thursday, September 12, 2019 - 9:00am to Saturday, September 14, 2019 - 4:00pm, Thursday, October 3, 2019 - 9:00am to Saturday, October 5, 2019 - 4:00pm, Friday, October 4, 2019 - 9:00am to Sunday, October 6, 2019 - 4:00pm, Saturday, October 5, 2019 - 9:00am to Monday, October 7, 2019 - 4:00pm, Saturday, October 19, 2019 - 9:00am to Monday, October 21, 2019 - 4:00pm, Thursday, September 12, 2019 - 9:00am to Saturday, September 14, 2019 - 4:00pm, Thursday, October 3, 2019 - 9:00am to Saturday, October 5, 2019 - 4:00pm, Friday, October 4, 2019 - 9:00am to Sunday, October 6, 2019 - 4:00pm, Saturday, October 5, 2019 - 9:00am to Monday, October 7, 2019 - 4:00pm, Saturday, October 19, 2019 - 9:00am to Monday, October 21, 2019 - 4:00pm