Strong Girls will dream farther. Strong Women will help them get there.
VISION
Every girl will realize her inner strengths to dream and do.

MISSION
Strong Women, Strong Girls empowers girls to imagine a broader future through a curriculum grounded on female role models delivered by college women mentors, who are themselves mentored by professional women.

CORE VALUES

BE ACCOUNTABLE:
SWSG operates with transparency & integrity.

EXPECT QUALITY:
SWSG pursues excellence & innovation.

FOSTER RESPECT:
SWSG honors & supports diversity & inclusion.

BUILD COMMUNITY:
SWSG values & promotes partnership and collaboration.

EMBRACE DISCOVERY:
SWSG nurtures learning, creativity, development & fun.

SWSG AT A GLANCE

Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG) is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization that has been unapologetically focused on girls and their self-esteem since 2004. Our weekly after school group mentoring program addresses the unique social-emotional and leadership needs of girls in grades 3-5. Our preventative program offers a skills based curriculum, leadership training, exposure to diverse female role models and a supportive all-female environment for girls in underserved communities. Ultimately, we connect women and girls from multiple generations to promote empowerment and to build a pipeline of strong, confident, female leadership.

This social impact report is a synopsis of our collective progress and activities in the cities that we serve.
Dear Friend of SWSG,

Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG) turned 11 this past year! We are now the same age as our 5th grade girls, and like them, we’re looking to our future and new ways to grow stronger than ever. In fact, we’ve recently focused our energy on what’s next for SWSG by kicking off a 5-year strategic planning process. We are working to determine what growth looks like, what support we need to get there, and how to best move forward with our programming and program evaluation.

Guiding all of our strategic planning is our new vision that every girl will realize her inner strengths to dream and do.

When they enter our program, our girls are already strong. Statistically, they are at the peak of their self-esteem. Our goal is to give them the mentoring, leadership tools and supportive community they need to pursue broad dreams—and to turn the tide on the probability of their self-esteem dropping.

Recent strides in evaluating our data have proven our positive impact. But in our Pittsburgh and Boston communities, we know there is still work to be done. Many of our girls continue to live in under-resourced neighborhoods; struggle with physical, social and emotional health; and are hungry for formal relationships with female leaders and role models. As they move into adolescence, they remain vulnerable.

We are incredibly proud of the strong foundation we have established. With our energetic staff, engaged volunteers, new strategic goals and growing circle of supporters, we are excited to continue building our program and achieving an even greater impact on the girls we serve.

Will you join us in making our program even stronger? Please talk to us about volunteering, donating or partnering with us as we look to the future.

In Strength,

Louise Herrle
Executive Board Chair

Sabrina Saunders
Executive Director, Pittsburgh

Siiri Morley
Executive Director, Boston
In January, Strong Women, Strong Girls introduced the “Learning to Give” service curriculum, which was developed in Pittsburgh through a partnership with the Open Hearts Foundation (OHF). Our comprehensive curriculum included a skills-based approach to service—helping girls understand what qualities they must possess in order to serve others and make service a part of their everyday lives. Each week, the girls learned about a different skill through the lens of local and national female role models who have transformed adversity into opportunity. The girls developed these skills through a semester-long project that benefited the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Pittsburgh, PA and Boston, MA. The “Learning to Give” service curriculum taught local girls to view service as a way of life, rather than an occasional event. Through our partnership with the Open Hearts Foundation, we were able to empower hundreds of SWSG girls to not only invest in themselves, but also to invest in their communities through service.
“Strong Women Strong Girls has empowered me to use my voice and not be afraid to go after what I want.”

— COLLEGE MENTOR
“Every girl in this city has the potential to lead”

AYANNA PRESSLEY
Boston City Councilor At-Large

As a Special Advisor with Strong Women, Strong Girls, I am honored to share my perspective on the importance of their work in the Greater Boston Area.

Since my first day in office as a Boston City Councilor, I have been unwavering and unapologetic in my advocacy on behalf of women and girls. I have been fighting to dismantle barriers to their development and advancement, and to address those issues that disproportionately and adversely impact them—issues often ignored in City Halls and State Houses across the nation.

Strong Women, Strong Girls is an important partner in that work because they take a preventative approach to ensuring the continued success of women and girls in our city. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault as a college freshman, I know about the importance of investing in both pre-adolescent girls and college women.

SWSG is focused on combatting the statistic that a girl’s self-esteem peaks at age 9, when she is only in the 4th grade. In adolescence, her self-esteem is likely to drop at a much more dramatic rate than that of a boy’s. For girls from more affluent backgrounds, this drop can be mitigated with safety nets. For girls from more vulnerable backgrounds, Strong Women, Strong Girls often IS that safety net.

I stand with SWSG because every girl in this city has the potential to lead. Every girl is worth investing in. They are the future of our city.

Will you join me in supporting their critical work?

In sisterhood,

Ayanna Pressley

SWSG focuses on girls because they face unique challenges in adolescence. A recent Harvard report entitled “The Status of Women & Girls in Boston” notes, for example, that 16% of high school girls (compared to 9% of boys) have seriously considered attempting suicide this year. Nearly 50% of high school girls reported trying to lose weight, typically due to low self-esteem.
While Boston chapters participated in the Ronald McDonald service project, one group went above and beyond and pursued a community art project. Tufts University mentor Nikki Bank and girls from the Brown School painted electrical switchboxes throughout the Somerville neighborhood, inspired by the Frida Kahlo “strong work” curriculum. One participant remarked, while painting the powerful images, “Girls can also be the superheroes.”
In an effort to further engage girls in mentoring, Boston SWSG developed the Junior Mentoring Program (JUMP), launched at partner sites during the 2014-15 program year. Concerned about the lack of support for SWSG graduates transitioning to middle school after finishing the program in fifth grade, former SWSG program manager Mikki Pugh and SWG mentor Emma Brenner-Bryant from Tufts University developed the pilot program as a system to retain girls’ participation and facilitate “near peer” mentoring. Sixth grade girls, who were participants in the SWSG program, are eligible to apply to JUMP and their primary objective is to mentor alongside college age mentors.

This translates to numerous responsibilities for the junior mentors, which range from helping run programs and facilitating discussion to inspiring girls to fully participate in the activities through example. Junior mentors may even have the opportunity to lead a weekly workshop with the support of the college mentors. Through these engagements, JUMP mentors are able to develop their own leadership capabilities and build self-confidence in their skills. JUMP diversifies the variety of role models for girls in SWSG; many of the junior mentors share similar backgrounds and identities, often coming from the same neighborhoods as the girls they mentor. This cultivates valuable connections as the junior mentors can be both leader and peer.

Girls are able to see JUMP mentors in a leadership position and envision their own future successes and involvement. JUMP mentors meet twice a month for workshops that focus on the development of mentoring skills and also address the realities of adjusting to middle school.

The pilot program launched in the spring with seven junior mentors and has grown—another empowering expansion for the SWSG Boston network. SWSG is excited about the potential of this program as it continues to develop and establish supportive and reciprocal relationships between females of all ages.

“I see so much confidence in [my daughter] this year. She truly views herself as a leader, and presents herself confidently as such. I love seeing her not afraid to speak up and feeling like she has something to contribute.” — PARENT OF JUMP PARTICIPANT
“The girls make me hopeful about our future female leaders and remind me how I must push myself to be a better example.”

— COLLEGE MENTOR
Mentoring Women in Pittsburgh... Why it MATTERS!

When it comes to champions of female initiatives in Pittsburgh, one name that immediately comes to mind is Yvonne Campos. Yvonne has been a trailblazer in supporting women in our region. As founder of Campos Research in 1986, she is a nationally recognized moderator, speaker and consultant. Her organization has grown to become the premier research company in the area, and her passion for taking other women under her wing is legendary.

Yvonne’s company is currently undertaking a research study on how multi-generational mentoring programs like Strong Women, Strong Girls contribute to the revitalization and economy in Pittsburgh for all communities. We recently caught up with this supporter of SWSG to get her take on the importance of mentoring.

SWSG: How has a female mentoring relationship impacted your life?

YVONNE: I have been both a mentee and a mentor in my lifetime. In both cases, I would say that the relationship itself has been the most rewarding and impactful. Establishing a personal relationship with another person is of great value. They end up being lifelong relationships and resources. As a mentee, I have found other women to be powerful role models, showing that whatever it is can be done. She has done it, so why can’t I? I learn to see myself in the role and success I aspire to.

The joy of the relationships I have with other women as a mentor cannot be measured. We impact one another’s lives positively. Being able to share the learning I have acquired over the years—hoping some of that wisdom helps other women overcome and succeed—is what my life is all about. Whether it be a onetime encounter or an ongoing relationship, mentoring other women of any age is just part of my life.

SWSG: How do you encourage women to mentor other women?

YVONNE: It goes without saying that mentoring other women is like friendship. You have to be a good friend to have good friends. It’s the same with mentoring. You have to be willing to be a mentor in order to be lucky enough for someone to want to mentor you. We all need mentors in our lives, at every stage. Mentoring another woman is one of the most important things you can do in your life. It demonstrates who you are and says something positive about the impact you want to have. Mentoring is a huge example of a generous spirit.

SWSG: What is your hope for girls in the region?

YVONNE: My hope is that every girl will live up to her full potential—academically, professionally and economically—in order to contribute greatly to the region and the world. I have always thought Pittsburgh should be known as “the best place for women to grow and succeed”. We as a region should adopt this as our vision!
Girls in the program: 631
College Mentors: 220
Strong Leaders (Professional Mentors): 54
Mentoring Site Facilitators: 32
Undergraduate Mentoring Hours: 27,777
Strong Leader Mentoring Hours: 2,106

- 90% of parents plan to have their girl participate again next year.
- 94% of undergraduate mentors planned to participate again at the end of the program year.
- 100% of undergraduate mentors agreed that SWSG positivity influenced their mentoring skills.
- 85% of parents reported a noticeable increase in their girls confidence.
This year, in order to reach our goal of raising ambition for women and girls, Strong Women, Strong Girls was thoughtful about strengthening and expanding relationships within the broader Pittsburgh community. Understanding that SWSG can’t do this important work alone, we sought out partners and wrap-around services to enhance the opportunities already being offered to our girls and their mentors.

With assistance from partners like the Mentoring Partnership of SWPA, we were able to provide specialized mentorship trainings and implement a more robust mentor screening process. The result was a unique network of support for our 631 girls. Notably, we engaged more parents; collaborated with new local non-profit and for-profit organizations to present a reinvigorated Jump into Spring event; and hosted our first cross-city retreat on strategic planning. In addition to building upon our pipeline programs and partnerships with the Girls Scouts of SWPA and Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Allegheny County, we’ve worked to strengthen our school-based partnerships as well.

One of the key elements of our high-quality after-school mentoring program is having an effective partnership between SWSG Pittsburgh and our mentoring sites. At the Barrett Elementary School site in Homestead, PA, site facilitator and SWSG volunteer, Betty Lyons, is committed to ensuring that girls realize their limitless potential. Over the past two years, we’ve served 58 girls at Barrett—a record for Homestead. We can attribute much of that success to dedicated partners like Betty, who are advocates for SWSG and are vital to our program’s growth.

When we asked for nominations for our annual Strong Awards event, honoring the leadership and exceptional contributions of women and girls, Betty immediately thought to nominate Lorraine, an SWSG girl and Barrett 5th grade student. “When I first met Lorraine, she was a quiet, shy child with little confidence. She has been able to overcome that and has been able to become a leader at our school. Lorraine can always be counted on to go above and beyond,” Betty wrote.

Lorraine was 1 of 3 honorees selected out of a dynamic and diverse group of 37 women and young women nominees. On August 21, 2015, Lorraine was honored at the event, attended by over 200 community supporters. When asked about the importance of our community relationships, Laura Pollanen, SWSG Pittsburgh Program Manager shared, “Girls like Lorraine flourish because of support from women like Betty—women who see the need for strong mentorship and role models, to help the girls in our community overcome their obstacles and use their own talents to succeed.”

With the dedication of our volunteers and the support of strong partners throughout the Pittsburgh region, SWSG is poised to help more and more strong girls like Lorraine thrive as they come into their own.

“Lorraine has overcome a lot in her life. She has gained such an understanding of how to be a strong young woman and how to help others to become better people also. She has become a true leader.”

— BETTY LYONS
“I have made connections and wonderful memories with my strong sisters and the strong girls to last a lifetime. I welcome every opportunity to talk about what I do and am so proud to be even a small part of this fantastic organization and work alongside other amazing, strong women.”

— COLLEGE MENTOR
Thank you to the individuals, foundations, and corporations that make our work possible

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UPMC Health Plan
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YouthPlaces
The process of reminding the [mentees] that they can do whatever they want also forces me to remind myself the same truth; creating relationships that are truly mutually empowering. I would like to do this for the rest of my time at college (and the rest of my life, too).”

— COLLEGE MENTOR
Please be in touch if you would like to review our audited FY15 financial statements when they are available.
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BOSTON
262 Washington Street
Suite 602, Boston, MA 02108
617-338-4833
Boston@swsg.org

PITTSBURGH
2200 Sarah Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
412-488-0791
Pittsburgh@swsg.org

swsg.org