

# GirlFormation

*"Sisterhood must be practiced daily, not merely invoked apocalyptically. Like the practice of friendship, the practice of sisterhood is an ongoing, complex commitment. Such commitment requires the courage of perseverance."*

— Phyllis Chesler

## Maine's New Law

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §1001, sub-§15, ¶A, as enacted by PL 1999, c. 351, §2, is amended to read:

1. The board of directors of each school district shall adopt and implement a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment of all students. The policy shall, at a minimum, include or provide for all of the following:

A.) A definition of bullying and harassment. 'bullying and harassment' means an intentional written, verbal or physical act or threat of a physical act that, under the totality of circumstances: A reasonable person should know will have the effect of: physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person, or placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to his or her property; or is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for a student. This includes actions that are based on any real or perceived characteristic, including, but not limited to, age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion,

marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, socioeconomic status, or familial status.

B.) Professional development for all teachers and administrators to help them implement this policy: Schools will provide training on the school district's or public school academy's harassment, intimidation or bullying policies to school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with pupils. A school district or public school academy shall incorporate information regarding the school district's or public or private school academy's policy against harassment, intimidation or bullying into each school's employee training program.

C.) Develop process by which to evaluate on an ongoing basis improved school climate as it relates to bullying and harassment.

D.) Develop a process for discussing the harassment, intimidation or bullying policy with pupils.

E.) Monitoring and evaluation of the policy's effectiveness on an annual basis. (Evaluate/Assess)

F.) Procedures for receiving and respond-

ing to complaints. (Protocols for staff, admin, teachers, parents)

G.) Consequences and appropriate remedial action for violation of the policy, taking into account the pattern and severity of particular bullying and harassing behavior.

H.) Public involvement in developing the policy and public notice of the policy. Public schools and school districts are encouraged to form bullying prevention task forces, programs and other initiatives involving school staff, pupils, administrators, volunteers, parents, law enforcement and community members.

I.) Prohibition of reprisals or retaliation against any person who cooperates or assists in the investigation of bullying or harassing behavior.

J.) Each school board shall develop procedures necessary to implement and administer this section.

K.) To assist school districts and public schools in developing policies for the prevention of harassment, intimidation or bullying, the department of education shall develop a model policy applicable to grades K-12. This model policy shall be issued no later than March 2006 and rolled out through the Maine School Management.

The theme of this edition is Girlfighting, Bullying and Relational Aggression, and how these behaviors damage girls. On back page, I have included the newly adopted Maine law requiring each school district to create an anti-bullying program. Phyllis Chesler's quote above reminds me of the important role women have in demanding anti-bullying curriculum that addresses the bullying activity quietly going on in schools among groups of girls and boys. It's time for all women who have experienced bullying or have been a bully to have the courage to stand up, and ask our school districts to recognize these behaviors as damaging to girls. The antiquated stereotype of a school yard male aggressor has been the focus of too many anti-bullying programs. Let's persevere to recognize that today's bully looks and acts a lot different. A shift in consciousness can benefit the experiences of girls across the state of Maine.

Carrie Charpentier, Editor-in-Chief

## Listening to What Girls are Hearing

By Mary O'Rear, Executive Director, Mainely Girls

An email forwarded to me in February said, "In a 2005 school-wide survey conducted by a Civil Rights team in a Maine High School, 60% of students surveyed said that they hear derogatory remarks about young women every week. The comments are often about changes in their bodies or their body size."

The email reminded me of the very sobering finding uncovered in the 1998-1999 statewide survey Mainely Girls conducted with 400 middle and high school girls. 51% of the girls said they had been verbally abused. 2/3 of those girls said the source was someone living in her home. 1/3 said the abuse occurred outside her home.

These two statements tell us that a lot of girls are being confronted with a lot of negative comments about themselves in the two spaces that girls spend the bulk of their time and which should be safe places for them: home and school.

The good news is that Maine law now requires all schools to have a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment of all students, and procedures to address such behavior. Effective September 2006, policies and procedures must include:

- 1 A definition of bullying and harassment,
- 2 Effective prevention strategies,
- 3 Staff and administrator training,
- 4 Monitoring and evaluation of the policy's effectiveness,
- 5 Procedures for receiving and responding to complaints,
- 6 Consequences and remedial action,
- 7 Public notice of the policy, and
- 8 A prohibition of reprisals or retaliation against anyone who cooperates or assists in the investigation of bullying or harassing behavior.

*Continued on inside front cover*

## Girlfighting BOOK REVIEW Brown, L.M. (2003) *Girlfighting*. New York: New York University Press.

Book Review By Carolyn Charpentier

Author Lyn Mikel Brown has written multiple books analyzing the experiences of American girls. Based on research, this book focuses on the cultural ideals that American society supports, and how these cultural ideals encourage girlfighting. Brown's book "excavates and exposes the cultural roots of girlfighting."

Girlfighting encompasses many of the behaviors described by Rachel Simmons in *Odd Girl Out*: rumor spreading, exclusion, note passing, gossiping and name calling. Brown

traces the origins of these behaviors to a struggle for power among girls. Girls struggle for power as they feel disempowered by the cultural ideals that society forces upon girls. American society sanctions two choices for girls: be like a boy or be liked by a boy. This dichotomy sets girls up against each other, so that "success in either direction depends on belittling and decontaminating oneself from the girls who took the other path." The many cultural ideals that reinforce this dichotomy are so ingrained in our lifestyles that they become a "taken-for-granted reality."

What Brown says we need to do is have a shift in consciousness so the damaging messages sent to girls are exposed. Girls need the opportunity to create new cultural ideals and messages, so they can take control over their futures. As Brown points out, encouraging girlfighting maintains the status quo. Brown details twenty steps that we can take to counteract the cultural ideals directed at girls that have become part of our taken for granted reality. Please purchase Lyn Mikel Brown's book to read these twenty steps as well as her amazing knowledge and research surrounding American girls' experiences.

## Mission

The goal of this publication is to effectively create a girls' network to:

- give Maine girls an opportunity to express themselves to other girls
- provide a way of promoting girls' events and opportunities
- inform educators, parents, and others about ways to support girls
- aid in the cross-fertilization of successful programs
- create a network of women working with and supporting each other's efforts.

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## Funder

GirlFormation is made possible through the generous funding of The Morton Foundation.

*Continued from cover*

GirlFormation is using the passage of this long-overdue bill as an opportunity to consider how bullying and harassment impact girls, and to provide resources schools can use to reduce these negative behaviors. (The complete text of the bill is printed later in this newsletter as are reviews of some excellent programs schools may use to educate students about bullying and harassment.)

*"Verbal abuse is far more prevalent than physical and sexual abuse combined, but it is often dismissed as not being very harmful."*

Traditionally, bullying and harassment were thought about in terms of physical aggression involving boys. In reality, the most common form of bullying and harassment is verbal, and girls are more commonly the targets of negative comments from boys and other girls. This verbal aggression includes name calling, using labels to ostracize others, exclusion, scape-goating, threatening, disappearing others, collusion, and non-verbal gesturing, as well as the intentional spreading of malicious rumors that can destroy a person's reputation and impact how others treat her. In some cases, falsely labeling girls as sexually promiscuous has resulted in their sexual assault. In other cases, escalation of name-calling and other targeted abuse has led to suicide. We have also learned that many girls are using the internet as a tool for verbally abusing each other.

Verbal abuse is far more prevalent than physical and sexual abuse combined, but it is often dismissed as not being very harmful. We're raised to believe that names can't hurt us. On the contrary, verbal abuse may negatively impact and stay with a child or adolescent longer than all other forms of abuse. Its wounds sometimes never heal. It attacks one's core self and can permanently destroy one's faith in self, others, and the future.

Studies show that when faced with direct aggression, verbal or otherwise, most girls say nothing to the perpetrator, nor to anyone in authority. Instead, they try to ignore and avoid the person and hope the problem goes away. Meanwhile, they internalize the pain which can be expressed in self-mutilation, eating disorders, depression,

poor grades, dropping out of school, substance abuse, or suicide - behaviors which often arise during middle school years and increase when girls get to high school.

Many adults and adolescents don't consider verbal abuse as abuse. When spoken in an informal setting, the school's hallway or cafeteria, and said in a joking or teasing manner, sometimes even the person being targeted doesn't recognize that what's being said to him or her is abusive. What defines

abuse is not the intent of the speaker, but the feelings of the person spoken to or about. The "test questions" should be: How do I feel when I hear that comment being made about me? Am I hurt by it?"

Girls need to have a safety plan - specific works

or actions they can follow to be safe if someone starts verbally abusing them. A good plan would involve:

- 1) Calling the person on their behavior. "It's not OK to call me \_\_\_ or to do \_\_\_."
- 2) Knowing when to leave.
- 3) Knowing they can and should go to adults in their school or in their personal lives to ask for help, and to keep asking for help until it is provided.

Most abuse doesn't happen in isolation, and those witnessing abuse should be informed of the role they can play in ending it or preventing escalation. A quiet statement from ally, such as, "Leave her alone; let's go," can be quite effective as it removes peer approval while offering a face-saving out.

Those not specifically targeted but who witness cruel or derogatory comments being levied at others are also being abused. The sexual slur may deeply pierce a girl standing nearby who is a rape victim, or the gay person who is not out to his friends or family.

We now have a law that requires Maine schools to deal with bullying and harassment, and we should make the most of this opportunity, beginning with talking about name-calling and physical aggression with the youngest children. What starts as name-calling can quickly escalate to bullying and harassment, to unhealthy dating relationships, and domestic abuse. Using some of the excellent programs described in this newsletter can help make clear to everyone, students, parents and staff, the definitions, boundaries, and steps to follow to prevent bullying and harassment and keep our schools safe places for all students.

## Odd Girl Out *The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls.*

### BOOK REVIEW

By Carolyn Charpentier

Simmons, R. (2002) *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls.*

San Diego: Harcourt Trade Publishing, 296 pages.

This book is a must read for all women. Have you ever bullied another girl? Have you ever been bullied by a group of girls? Have you ever acted as an accomplice to group bullying another girl? Research shows the majority of women answer yes to at least one of the above questions.

Author Rachel Simmons writes, I have indulged in the knowledge of a shared secret, in eyes locking exclusively with someone else's or rolling in furtive annoyance. I have said I wasn't angry when I was, then degraded people behind their backs. I have gossiped. I have relished that rush of inclusion at the expense of an odd girl out.

Bullying behavior in girls is not overtly aggressive, and as a result the nonverbal aggression often goes under the radar with parents and educators.

Rachel Simmons calls these often covert, collective behaviors "alternative aggression", and she breaks them down into three categories: 1) relational 2) indirect and 3) social aggression.

**Relational aggression** involves acts that "harm others through damage (or threat of damage to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendships, or group inclusion. These include mean facial expressions, negative body language, excluding others, threatening to stop a friendship unless the perpetrator gets her way or sabotaging other friendships to cause hurt.

**Indirect aggression** is used by the perpetrator to hurt another girl without direct confrontation. It is covert behavior in which the perpetrator makes it seem as though there has been no intent to hurt at all, for instance, using a girl to spread rumors about another girl.

**Social aggression** is intended to damage self-esteem or social status within a group. Instances include

spreading rumors or excluding a girl within a social setting. Since relationships are a form of currency that girls use to rate their self-worth, being isolated is their deepest fear. Simmons goes into some depth describing the impact of isolation to punish girls. Simmons descriptions bring up vivid memories and feelings of how it felt to pick a seat at lunch or on the school bus.

Before reading this book, I would've described all of the above behaviors as just how girls act. These behaviors seem like a normal part of girls' development or as Simmons calls them, rites of passage. Isn't that just the way girls behave in junior high and high school?

After reading this book, I see the critical necessity of challenging such behavior. These painful childhood interactions can impact many women's relationships for the rest of their lives.

*Events of unexplained aggression and loss mark some girls forever. The worry that there is always a hidden layer of truth beneath a façade of "niceness" can leave girls permanently unsure about what they can trust in others and in themselves. These stories in particular haunt me. There are the girls, it seems, who drift away from other girls, who cease to support one another, who mature into mistrust and even hatred toward their peers.*

In the last two chapters, Simmons provides recommendations. Parents have been largely left out of the anti-bully discussions as conversation has focused on the perpetrator, victim and silent peers. Simmons book offers a number of ways that parents can empower themselves and become part of the anti-bully discussion.

As for educators, Simmons writes, One of our best hopes for changing the hidden culture of aggression is teachers. Students and teachers need to recognize alternative aggressions, and refuse to tolerate them in the classroom and outside the classroom.

The institutional support of stopping and preventing bully behavior has been largely misguided. Most current anti-

bully curriculums don't provide a clear language for describing the alternative aggression behaviors. As a result, teachers and staff are unsure of how to address these behaviors. If there isn't a language describing the behaviors, and they largely occur without the teacher seeing anything, then how do educators address the destructive behavior? I see the answer to this question beginning with administrators, superintendents and school boards requiring this book to be read as part of professional development hours for all school staff members. These behaviors take place inside and outside of the classroom, and as a collective educational unit all staff must understand the behaviors to prevent them and stop them.

*When we have built a positive vocabulary for girls to tell each other their truths, more girls will raise their voices.*

Since bullying is a very humiliating experience for girls, many times they remain silent and internalize the feelings of pain and shame. It's critical that girls are encouraged to talk about bullying in a non-judgmental environment. Simmons suggests the following questions:

- *When girls want to be mean in your class, what kinds of things do they do?*
- *Does the teacher see it when it's happening? Why or why not? How does she react?*
- *Are some girls more secret about their meanness? How?*
- *Can friends be mean to each other? How?*

Talking about their experiences with you will alleviate the girls internalized feelings of failure. Simmons also provides a six step exercise that girls can participate in to challenge their fears of isolation.

This book truly is a must-read for all women. I have found the book to be educational and self-reflective. I can identify with being the aggressor, the victim and the middle-girl who facilitated other aggressors. It has challenged me to rethink how I currently approach other women, and how I can better support this newly unveiled language of alternative aggression within my family and my community.

## Submissions from girls, "4 All Girls" Members Lily & Kathie, and Plunge by Sarah

"4 All Girls" is a group in Damariscotta with about 10-11 fourth grade girls who meet weekly. Participating girls try activities that help them in adjusting to transitions typical of middle school aged kids. Some of the programs they have offered are process art, yoga, challenge rope course, economic awareness and two sessions with mental health practitioners who offered guidance on mother/daughter relationships and what to do with anger.

Lily, a member of "4 All Girls" submitted the wonderful drawing of the girls standing united. Katie, also a member of "4 All Girls" submitted a brief description of her feelings about the group,

*Hello, my name is Kathie and I live in Damariscotta, Maine. My age is 10 and I'm in a girls group called 4 All Girls. I feel highly comfortable there because I feel like I can really express myself without the worry that someone will judge me for what I say, and how I act. I adore this girls group because I know that I don't have to hide my personality behind something I'm not. And besides, it's just girls so if I say or do something wrong there won't be any staring or scowling, just an understanding look.*



### Plunge By Sarah,

Girl Scout from York, age 11

"Sarah! It's your turn to dive!" Bella told me. I was at Camp Pondicherry, my Girl Scout camp. My whole unit was down at the waterfront. It was a warm, sunny day, no clouds in the sky. Ideal for swimming. We were all going to dive, or at least try to, and I was the first one up.

Looking down at the water made me a little bit frightened, but with all my friends encouraging me, I felt a lot more confident. One of the counselors helped me put my body in the right position to dive.

"Go for it!!" "You can do it!!" I could hear my friends urging me on. Then it happened. I took the Big Plunge. The water rushed by my face. From the blazing sun to the coolness of the water in a matter of seconds. I could taste the success. The water was cloudy so I came up rapidly. When I came up Bella was so excited.

"That was brilliant!!" she exclaimed. Bella was from England. She always seemed to use the term "brilliant" when she meant "good job." For the rest of the swim session I assisted other girls in doing their dives and I helped them on their technique. We dove like crazy the whole time. I've felt like queen of the world ever since I took the Big Plunge!!

Thanks for the submissions,

Lily, Kathie and Sarah!

### Email links for girls: [www.forgirlsandtheirdreams.org](http://www.forgirlsandtheirdreams.org)

New Moon magazine is a publication dedicated to girls. The website, [www.forgirlsandtheirdreams.org](http://www.forgirlsandtheirdreams.org) is sponsored by New Moon magazine, and has many wonderful resources for girls ages 8 and older. On the home page, there is a link "Clubs" that contains membership information for New Moon Book Club, the Pen Pal Club and a "Writer's Club." This offers girls the opportunity to share ideas and feelings with girls across the country. There's a link to the question of the month with feedback from girls. This month's question is "What makes YOU beautiful?" There's a link to "Adventures" with various opportunities for girls. There's also a link to "Global Village" that describes experiences of girls around the world. As always, ask an adult to preview the site before going on yourself. Let us know at GirlFormation what you think of this website!

I found this agreement on the website, [www.girlzone.com/ilai/FightFairAgreement\\_ilai.html](http://www.girlzone.com/ilai/FightFairAgreement_ilai.html)

The twelve principles set forth are all worthy commitments for friends to make with each other. Consistently demonstrating these actions can improve the quality of your friendships.

### FIGHT FAIR AGREEMENT

I promise to:

1. stick to solving one particular problem and to not try to change the whole world - or even one person - in one argument.
2. listen to the other person's side with an open mind and to not interrupt.
3. think about how the other guy is feeling.
4. take responsibility for my actions.
5. tell the truth.
6. not try to bully or scare someone into accepting my point of view.
7. not use physical violence.
8. not name-call or make threats.
9. not make excuses.
10. take a break to cool off, when I am too angry to be fair, then get back to the fight.
11. live up to my part of the agreement when the fight is settled.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

## Body Blows By Natasha Irving, Program Director, Mainely Girls

"Body tracing" was the activity du jour for our Girl-to-Girl mentor meeting in February. We split into groups of two girls and two mentors. One girl lay down on a huge piece of paper, and we traced her body. Our small group talked about words that we've heard that made us feel bad, then wrote those words on the outside of the traced body. On the inside, we wrote words that made us feel good.

I was shocked at what I heard: stupid, redneck, fat bitch, slut, and whore were among other names and phrases too numerous and vile to repeat. The girls we were sitting with were 11 and 12 years old, in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. They said they have heard these slurs, these insults, these offensive and nauseating names at school on a daily basis.

We asked the girls how it made them feel to be called these names, or to hear them. Their reactions and emotions were mixed: bad, scared, dirty, and disappointed - all at the same time.

"What do you do when you hear this?" They sometimes tell a teacher and then the student gets a slap on the wrist, but they usually don't do anything.

"Why don't you do anything?" Because it's happening all the time. They are constantly hearing it in hallways, whispers in the classroom, at recess, gym class, everywhere. They are hearing it from boys and girls.

We then worked on the words that made us feel good, and I was happy with what I heard. These girls were powerful and proud to be called: strong, smart, happy.

Toward the end of the meeting, the groups all shared their posters: they were all the same. Horrible, unimaginable insults on the outside. Some of the other girls didn't have such great words on the inside, however: skinny, good girl, pretty, nice. It makes sense, though. Would you rather be a fat bitch, or a skinny good girl?

Some of the girls were angry. Really angry. Why are they being berated so much and so often? Why them? Why girls?

Putting this story into this issue dedicated to bullying and verbal abuse is important because it is what opened my eyes to the immediacy and gravity of the problem. I don't think I need to address the psychological impacts hearing this language has on girls. The rest of this newsletter does it beautifully. I just want readers to realize that these girls are hearing language everyday that would make Quentin Tarantino blush. We need to demand better for our girls, because the way it is now is completely unacceptable. In order for our girls to grow into happy and healthy women, they have to, at the very least, spend their days in a safe environment. Right now, most schools are not that place.

## Resources

**From Adversaries to Allies: A Curriculum for Change** by Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D. and Mary Madden, Ph.D. This 70 page, 8-unit bully-prevention program for girls builds on the research about adolescent girls and uses the practices shown to be most effective with them. It's based on the premise that girls can be loyal and compassionate toward one another, that they can understand and question the societal stereotypes and media messages that divide them, and that given a chance to really think and do something about it, they will choose to be at a girl's back rather than to stab her in it. Specific units focus on Media Madness, Girlfighting, Moving Beyond Cliques and Clubs, Sexual Harassment, and From Object to Subject-Healthy Dating Relationships. FMI contact [info@hardygirlshealthywomen.org](mailto:info@hardygirlshealthywomen.org)

**Hostile Hallways....Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School** commissioned by the AAUW Educational Foundation and researched by Harris Interactive, 2001. This report looks closely at this problem that deeply affects students' learning. Sexual harassment—and all the bullying, teasing, and touching it entails—is pervasive: Four out of every five students personally experience it. And whether words or actions, harassment upsets students and affects their everyday school lives. This report, with updated facts as well as specific examples in students' own voices, helps parents, educators, activists, and policy-makers to better understand the scope of the problem and address it. FMI contact [foundation@aauw.org](mailto:foundation@aauw.org) May be borrowed from Mainely Girls at [megirls@midcoast.com](mailto:megirls@midcoast.com)

**Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools** (grades 6-12). FMI contact GPN Educational Media at 1-800-228-4630.

**Teens Who Care!** Amelia Butman is a 2006 recipient of the "Teens Who Care Award". The Abnaki Girl Scout Council, Samantha Lott, nominated her for her work in MOOSE Group - Mentors Offering Anti-Smoking Education and Becca's Closet-non profit organization (started the only chapter in Maine) to give girls free prom dresses. etc.

Amelia is a co-founder of MOOSE with in the Piscataquis Public Health Council since 2001. She has lead workshops, given presentations to schools within the Piscataquis County and represented Maine at a Health Summit in Washington, D.C. On April 13<sup>th</sup> there will be a presentation/workshop at Milo Schools. Her efforts started in helping her peers quit smoking or try not to start has blossomed into adding physical activity and healthy eating. She also has given tools to others to start their own program and help their peers. One success story is a middle school student was smoking 2 packs a day. His whole family were smokers for many years. It is now 3 1/2 years later and none of them smoke. This young man still keeps in contact with Amelia to let her know how he and his family are doing.

With Becca's Closet she has given out 1,958 dresses to date to young women throughout the state of Maine. because of this, a young girl in Hodgdon Maine has started a chapter in Northern Maine, a young girl in Guilford is starting one and another in the Waterville area. She also has secured makeup kits from a cosmetic company in New York to help out with this special day for girls. She also has given out wedding dresses, mother of the bride/groom dresses, bridesmaid dresses and tuxedos.

**Flirting or Hurting?** Winner of two awards for excellence, this 30-minute video is the best around to teach 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> graders how to identify and respond to sexual harassment in their schools. The host, an older sister character, provides definitions, explanations and insights based on her own experiences. The video also uses reenactments and dramatized interviews to distinguish between flirting and harassment, and identify different effects harassment can have on students. Four different scenarios are presented, covering a wide range of gender combinations: boy to girl, girl-to-girl, boys/girls to boy, as well as adult to student. The program also shows students how to respond to offensive behavior whether they are a target or a bystander. A sure way to educate students and spark discussion. A useful video for any educator who wants to create a safer school environment for their students. May be borrowed from Mainely Girls at [megirls@midcoast.com](mailto:megirls@midcoast.com)

## Summer Events

### The University of Maine, All Day Sports Camps.

July 10-14 and July 24-28  
Girls and Boys ages 7-12  
Contact: University of Maine/Athletic  
Department Summer Sports Camps  
5747 Memorial Gym Orono, ME 04469  
Go to: [www.Goblackbears.com](http://www.Goblackbears.com)

### Girl Equestrian Summer Camp

1,2,4,6 and 8 week sessions  
Beginner riders encouraged!  
Girls ages 12-17  
Manchester, ME  
Contact: Jacqui Byron at (207) 623-7847

### Maine Youth Center Girls' Film Festival

A film and discussion program for girls  
incarcerated at the Maine Youth Center.  
Contact: Mainely Girls  
Rockport, ME (207) 230-0170

### Coastal Studies for Girls

A semester school Provides high school  
sophomores with an opportunity to excel  
in science and technology, in a community  
defined by academic, experiential and  
inspirational learning.  
Go to: [www.coastalstudiesfor girls.org](http://www.coastalstudiesfor girls.org)  
Address: 209 RT. 1 #290  
Falmouth, ME 04105  
(207) 807-2199

### All Girl Surf School

The only all girl surf school in the state  
offers 2-day, as well as private lessons.  
Contact: Aimee Vlachos  
Wahine Kai East  
Kennebunk, ME 04043  
(714) 924-2277  
Go to: [www.themaineurfschool.com](http://www.themaineurfschool.com)

### Girls on The Farm

Afterschool Alliance  
Girls grades 6, 7 and 8  
Contact: Marlene Menard  
Pineland Farms, New Gloucester, ME  
(207) 926-3913 x104

### Maine Women's Fund, New Girls' Network

The Brew Girls Festival  
[www.maine womens fund.org/programs](http://www.maine womens fund.org/programs)

### Performing Arts Camp for Girls and Boys

Bethel Camp for the Arts  
Girls and Boys ages, 8-15  
Offers 2 week sessions  
Contact: Bethel Camp for the Arts  
P.O. Box 812076 Boca Raton, FL 33484  
(561) 865-4330  
Go to: [www.maineartscamp.com](http://www.maineartscamp.com)

## Odd Girl Speaks Out, Book Review

Simmons, R. (2004) *Odd Girl Speaks Out*. San Diego: Harcourt Trade Publishers.

*Odd Girl Speaks Out* provides a revealing look at girls' relationships. The book is a collection of writing pieces submitted by girls on topics like "bullies, cliques, popularity and jealousy." The writing pieces are short stories and poems describing various scenarios from multiple perspectives. Simmons groups the writing pieces into six chapters:

CHAPTER 1: THE SOUND OF A GIRLS VOICE: Introduction  
CHAPTER 2: WHY IS IT MY FAULT THAT I DON'T WANT TO BE HER FRIEND?  
CHAPTER 3: A NEVER-ENDING NIGHTMARE: When Friends Turn On You  
CHAPTER 4: IT'S THE WAY GIRLS SURVIVE: Aggression, Fear and Revenge  
CHAPTER 5: I WANTED TO FIT IN SO BADLY: Life as the Odd Girl Out  
CHAPTER 6: FINDING YOUR INNER STRENGTH

At the beginning and end of each chapter, Simmons provides insight on each theme, but she keeps the passages to a readable length for teenagers so they don't feel like their reading a textbook. Each summary provides useful research, ideas and strategies for the chapter's theme.

Clearly, there is a value for girls to read other girls' writings that describe very similar painful interactions. It can be terrifying for a girl to feel isolated as the only one being left out, gossiped about or given the cold-shoulder by the group. Reading about parallel experiences of other girls is a beginning step to involve girls in the recognition and elimination of alternative aggression within their communities.

There is a value for parents and educators in reading this book as well. Reading about the painful experiences of these girls, can help parents and educators better understand the girls they love and work with. What I also found valuable about this book is the insight it provides on how the internet is used as a tool to facilitate alternative aggression among girls. Many of the stories are laced with references to emails that are sent to communicate negative and hurtful messages. Simmons details the dangers of using email as a weapon to injure relationships. On page 144, Simmons writes a section called "IM and Email: Clicking Your Way Through a Fight." As girls read this section, Simmons provides relevant reasons for not using email to fight. As parents and educators read this section, they will start to realize the wide use of email by students to bully one another. Overall, the book *Odd Girl Out* is an excellent read for girls and women alike.

### Tips for Parents and Teachers:

As adults we should be encouraging our kids to talk about their experiences. Ask questions like, "What makes you angry about how the world treats you?" Ask questions about what messages media sends us about healthy relationships, body size, gender stereotypes, and the importance of having lots of money. If we don't discuss these issues with our kids, they are forced to sort out all of the confusing messages alone. Perhaps, a group of girls could form a local coalition to meet regularly to talk about these difficult issues. If girls are provided a safe place with a respectful environment, they will be more willing to talk openly and honestly with each other.

### BodyWise Eating Disorders Information Packets

"Thank you for sending me the BodyWise Packet. The material is terrific. As a helath assistant in the school system and as a Registered Dietitian in private practice, the information is invaluable. Thank you!"

— Kim Norbert MS, RD

Some of these packets are still available for schools with students in grades, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. Packets provide eating disorders information for middle school personnel, an explanation of how eating disorders and obesity are related, and a number of pamphlets specifically written for school nurses and counselors, principals and administrators, physical education teachers, coaches, classroom teachers, parents, etc. A list of important resources is also included.

If you'd like to receive a packet, please email your request and a mailing address to [megirls@midcoast.com](mailto:megirls@midcoast.com) and include BodyWise in the subject line.

## Book Reviews for selecting good summer reading

### Mean Chicks, Cliques and Dirty Tricks.

BOOK REVIEW By Kathleen Hastings

Shearin Karres, E. (2004)  
*Mean Chicks, Cliques and Dirty Tricks*.  
Avon, MA: F and W Publications.

This book calls itself "a real girl's guide to getting through the day with smarts and style", I wondered as I read this book what "real girl" is truly benefiting from the myths perpetuated throughout these stories. The book is short and therefore easy to read, but hard to read past the frustration over the constant labeling of the so called "mean girl" personality traits and cliques to beware. This book titles its chapters with headings like, "the Snob", "The Traitor", "The Gossip"; is it not better to focus on how we can positively implement change within ourselves, before we go labeling the characteristics of those we wish to avoid.

*Mean Chicks, Cliques and Dirty Tricks* included lots of cool quotes, by everyone from Oprah Winfrey to Eleanor Roosevelt. The format was also more fun and trendy, somewhat like a magazine. It included everything from real-life stories to self quizzes to cool checklist. This book also offered lots of good advice and inspiration from fellow teen girls, as well as a few write-ins to Dear Dr. Erika at the beginning of each chapter. The author states that she polled 1,000 teen girls from various locations, backgrounds and schools to answer the question "What is the major problem for girls today", their answer, *Other Girls!*, was one of the main reasons she wanted to offer help with this guide.

Obviously this is a personal as well as professional interest for this author, as she speaks of her own painful teen years in post World War II Germany. She seems to speak with experience and sympathy but still with a bit of spite in her language. This tends to tarnish the good intentions of the book by focusing too much on the negative aspects of "mean chicks", like "how to spot one" and less on how one can spot these aspects in herself. I do agree with the overall point of this book, which she summarizes in part III, specifically Chapter 9, titled "The Power of Several", where Erika writes that we could all use more "girl-girl support", how very true. This book is definitely written more for the young/pre-teen with its trendy layout and peer stories and advice.

### Girl Wise

BOOK REVIEW By Kathleen Hastings

DeVillers, J. (2002) *GirlWise*.  
New York: Crown Publishing.

This is a fun, positive and upbeat book for any young girl to use. You can read it cover to cover, or use it more like a reference and read about certain topics as you need. *Girlwise* seemed to be more realistic and helpful, she offered a more positive focus on how the individual can create change among themselves to feel more confident and happy. She covers it all from the embarrassment of walking out of the bathroom with toilet paper on your shoe, to how to ignore negative comments about our bodies. Even the titles of these chapters were more inspiring to read, focusing on positive characteristics, like feeling confident, in control, being more creative, and more conscious, these are personality traits we all could improve.

This book also had lots of cool quotes and good advice from peers, it had checklists and much more specific instruction with advice. For example, when talking about being more creative, this book mentions dance and more specifically, offers instructions on how to belly dance. The book is a compilation of great advice, helpful hints and secret tips from all kinds of experts like magazine publishers, authors, celebrities, sports experts, etc..., the contributor bios alone are pretty impressive. It also seemed to address the personal/spiritual side of the person, encouraging young girls to learn to be more comfortable in their aloneness, indulge in their passions and settle the mind through practices like meditation and yoga. The author cited specific examples of how to achieve these things throughout the book.

Julia DeVillers also seems to be personally and professionally connected to improving the lives of young women. She has developed the web site [www.girlwise.com](http://www.girlwise.com), has written other books related to teen girls and is the mother of two daughters. She too speaks with experience and sympathy but not as much of the negativity as *Mean Chicks, Cliques and Dirty Tricks*. *GirlWise* definitely is written for the older teenager, with its more mature responses, more practical advice and better direction.

### GirlFormation's First Movie Review!

### Odd Girl Out, The Movie Lions Gate Home Entertainment, 2005

Based on Rachel Simmon's 2002 book, *Odd Girl Out*, this movie tells the story of high school friends Vanessa, Stacy and Nicki, and the social struggles they go through. The movie begins with snapshots of the high school's hallways, classrooms, bathroom, lunchroom and gymnasium. Throughout the movie these are all places where girl bullying occurs.

During the ninety minute movie, the friendship among Vanessa, Stacy and Nicki drastically changes as Stacy and Nicki join together to bully Vanessa. The two girls won't let Vanessa sit at "their" lunch table, they start rumors about Vanessa, they call her mean names, they email her messages telling her she is fat, they corner her in the bathroom and tease her, and invite her to a birthday party that isn't really happening. All of these actions reminded me of similar incidences that occurred when I was in school. Although the actions were cruel and difficult to watch, there was a comfort in realizing that each girl who has been bullied or bullied others isn't alone. Girl bullying happens in schools all over the United States. Although Vanessa is devastated by the cruel actions of her "friends", she learns to stand up to them by the end of the movie. The empowering ending reminds each of us that we can stand up to bullies.

Teenagers will find this movie accurately depicts the twenty first century classroom experience. In particular, the use of text messaging and email to bully others is widely shown in the movie. This is a real eye opener for adults who haven't experienced bullying with these tools. Although the movie is rated PG-13, I do want to provide a clear warning for parents and educators that swears and derogatory comments towards women are made in the movie. There is also a mildly graphic scene showing Vanessa cutting her hair short. There also is a scene where Vanessa attempts suicide. Although these words and scenes can be disturbing, the reality is they describe the experiences of many girls in school. The value of sharing this movie with high school girls is showing them they are not alone. Girl bullying is a prevailing undercurrent in schools that needs to be identified and eliminated. Movies and books like *Odd Girl Out* are paving the way for this girl safe path.