

PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc.

PEARLS has a history of working steadfastly and successfully with some of Milwaukee's most at-risk girls. Our successes with out-of-school girl programming, coupled with the growing issues facing Milwaukee, led us to explore whether, and in what ways, we could expand our reach to meet the emotional, developmental, academic, and social needs of an even greater number of girls every year. What if PEARLS could serve as many as 10,000 girls annually? What would it take to grow participation and keep the integrity of the program? How would the organization need to expand? In May 2011, after a year of careful study and analyses, PEARLS' Board concluded that:

1. Milwaukee's poverty, low academic achievement, high teen pregnancy rates, and large numbers of at-risk teen girls point directly to the undeniable need for expanding PEARLS.
2. PEARLS' record of success in academic achievement, goal-setting, and pregnancy prevention signifies that the PEARLS experience indeed is transformative.
3. The core values and methods of the PEARLS' program need to remain intact to ensure an authentic expansion of PEARLS' programs and effectiveness.

In the summer of 2011, PEARLS embarked on its boldest and most auspicious project by launching the 10,000 Girls Initiative, a five-phase process that would lead to unprecedented program expansion. A clear vision and well-paced metrics marked the first phase of organizational and programmatic capacity-building. Currently we are on target to expand program participation from 850 girls in 2011 to 1,100 girls by the end of 2012. This unprecedented 30% participant growth is the direct result of sound planning, strategic community investments, experienced staff, and strong administration.

Elements of Phase One that have moved forward in the past year include: development of a long-term evaluation infrastructure, donor development expansion, volunteer management, alumnae relations, and expansion of program sites. Several current contracts are held with consultants to provide assistance in the following strategic areas: program assessment, alumnae outcomes, human resources, marketing, and fund development.

Funding from the RMYF will allow PEARLS to move forward to the next phase of the 10,000 Girls Initiative. Beginning in fall 2012, PEARLS will systematically put organizational and programmatic elements into place to begin Phase Two. This phase will result in phenomenal program growth: we will more than double our capacity and serve 2,250 girls annually by the end of Phase Two! Besides reaching greater numbers of needy teen girls, Phase Two also will be characterized by continued evaluation projects, development of an emerging PEARLS Alumnae Association, and exploration of how best to serve "high-need" girls.

We know there are girls who have high needs and experience even greater risks than girls PEARLS currently serves...girls enrolled in programs such as Wraparound Milwaukee or girls living in residential treatment facilities such as St. Charles Youth and Family Services and St. Aemilian-Lakeside. With your support, in Phase Two, PEARLS will research the characteristics of this high-need population, identify the skill-set needed to best serve them, and secure new site partner relationships to meet them where they are at in life.