

Evergreen Times

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Anything you can do, I can do better

Evergreen girls seek to make their mark

By Jeffrey Lo

Times Intern

Making slow and steady progress, American women have been fighting for equal rights throughout the last century, and transforming society in the process.

This trend continues in the Evergreen community as 17 young women from Evergreen Valley High School—along with former Evergreen High mathematics teacher Cheryl Lawton and local businesswoman Wendy Levine—have started the Team 22 chapter of a Bay Area-based organization known as Girls For a Change (GFC).

Founded in 2002 by Whitney Smith, with the assistance of Girl Scouts of Santa Clara County and the Santa Clara County Office of Women's Advocacy, GFC has approximately 1,000 members in the Bay Area today.

According to its mission statement, GFC's purpose is "to support urban middle and high school girls to become social change makers and innovators by empowering them to design, lead, fund and implement social change projects that tackle problems they face in their neighborhoods." In addition, they "provide the tools, resources and support girls need to move from being spectators to being leaders."

The infant organization has already accomplished several noteworthy achievements. For example, on Oct. 10, 2002, GFC held its first annual "Girl Summit" which included 1,100 young women and 500 adult women who witnessed an inspiring inaugural ceremony. In 2004, GFC extended its reach outside of Santa Clara County by creating action teams in Oakland, Santa Cruz and East Palo Alto.

In 2004, Lawton, who was then teaching at Evergreen Valley High School, discovered the organization and thought it would be a great idea to bring it to the Evergreen campus. Soon after its founding, GFC Team 22 (Evergreen) took on a life of its own,



The Evergreen Girls For Change, Team 22 includes, from left (Front row) Clara Le, Smita Mohan, Brittany Flemate and Tram Duong. (Second row) Judy Do, Emily Tang, Jennifer Ngan, Christine Hoang and Bich-Ha Nguyen. (Back row) Businesswoman Wendy Levine.

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participating in several major endeavors.

Its first project involved starting a recycling club on the EVHS campus, which resulted in implementation of the current recycling program at the school. "The GFC experience is awesome. The girls are all great. We get along and work together really well," said Smita Mohan Team 22 member and EVHS junior.

Project SCUPINO for 2005

Team 22's project for 2005 is "Smoking Causes Ugly People Inside and Out" or SCUPINO for short.

"We started this year's project because we believe that smoking is a nasty, smelly and an overall unhealthy habit. And, it's one many teenagers practice because they see it as being cool," said Brittany Flemate, EVHS senior.

"Our goal is to reduce the smoking habits of teens in our community. We will accomplish this by creating a visual campaign through billboards, bus ads and banners in shopping malls," continued Mohan.

The girls also plan to pursue the campaign through the popular AOL instant messaging program known as AIM. Team members have put their own personal profile in the message, "I don't give in."

This message has proven so popular that it's now spread beyond the team members as other students have put the message in their personal profiles as well.

In its relatively young tenure, the Evergreen GFC Team 22 has raised \$100 through an EVHS food festival and received \$1,450 in grants from GFC and Youth Service America (YSA). Yet Team 22 still needs help through donations and business support.

"Financial assistance from companies and the community would be great and is very much needed, because 20 girls can only do so much to get the word out about a change that we feel is necessary in our society," said Flemate.

"Also, we aren't the typical large organization looking for a huge amount of funding, but just a little bit of help," added Flemate.

"We are basically looking for a backbone to help us get the word out."

If you're interested in joining or helping Girls For a Change, visit the Web site at www.girlsforachange.org. You don't have to attend EVHS to join, but you do need to live in the Evergreen area. If you'd like to provide financial support for the Team 22 chapter of GFC, make checks payable to "Girls For a Change Team #22" and mail them to GFC, PO Box 1436, San Jose, CA 95109.

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