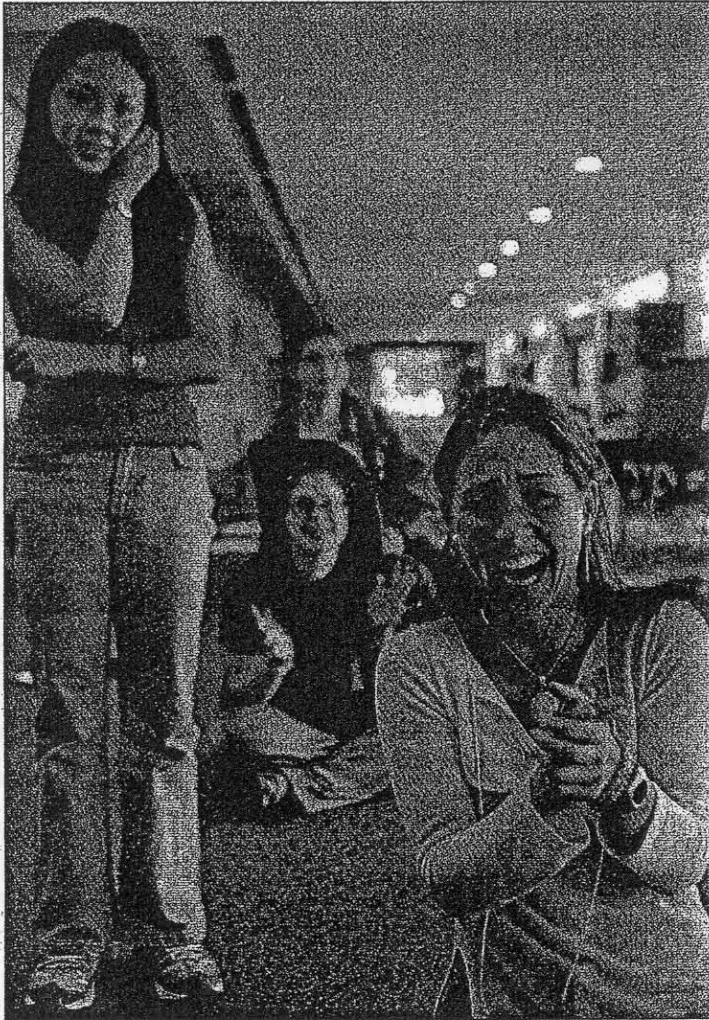


# Girls for change

Teens get tools to transform worlds



DAI SUGANO — MERCURY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

Lyna Tran, left, Emily Dubois, sitting in front of her younger sister, Abby, and Niko Clifford, founder of the Silicon Valley Girls Coalition, listen to a speech rehearsal for the Girls for a Change Summit.

## 300 WOMEN VOLUNTEER YEAR AS COACHES

By Karen de Sá  
*Mercury News*

One thousand girls will convene at Paramount's Great America today to change their worlds.

They are the girls of Silicon Valley.

Denisse Herrera, an East San Jose teen, says the police are there when she doesn't want them — shining lights from helicopters through her apartment window — but can take almost an hour to respond to routine calls. At the Girls for a Change Summit today, Herrera will launch a project to get a faster response time from local police.



Girls for a Change steering committee members create a fundraising poster.

Veronica Toscano, 16, from Alviso, says the half-hour limit on computers at her local library isn't enough time for high

schoolers to get homework done. She'll fight for youths who can't afford computers at home.

And Rebeca Alvarez, a Santa Clara 18-year-old, will lobby Caltrain. She lives right next to the rail lines and says the fences are too flimsy. "I have a son, and he's going to be able to walk soon," Alvarez said. "I don't want him to get on the train tracks."

The Change Summit has its roots in a survey of 5,000 youth conducted two years ago. A majority of girls reported feeling "invisible" in their communities and said their visions for the future amounted to little more than fantasy. The summit aims to help 1,000 girls turn those fantasies into reality.

The event is sponsored by