



HGHW's Executive Director Megan Williams' Remarks
at the Governor's Awards for Nonprofit Excellence
April 1, 2010

Thank you Commissioner Trafton, Scott Schnapp and all the wonderful people at the Maine Association of Nonprofits. And, thank you to President Adams and the fabulous folks at Colby College, an institution that is not only a programming partner but also a source of staff, volunteers, and supporters, having graduated three of our five staff at Hardy Girls.

We are thrilled to have our programs and practices recognized in this way. I'm accepting this award on behalf of all the people at Hardy Girls who have gotten us this far: our Board of Directors, led by Tobi Schneider (Central Maine's Philanthropist of the Year!), our tireless and hardworking staff - Jackie, Allison, Marissa, and Ruya, and, the eleven phenomenal young women who make up our Girls Advisory Board.

Hardy Girls has spent the last ten years finding out what happens when you listen to girls and take them seriously, when you empower them instead of treating them like victims, and when you work side by side with them to challenge the cultural narrative that pits girls against one another, promotes unrealistic body and beauty ideals, and sexualizes girls from a very young age, blurring the lines between childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

In our ten years of working alongside girls, we've found that when you trust girls, when you provide opportunities for them to connect with one another and when they have access to strong, smart role models, girls thrive. That's our story. Girls aren't the problem, they're the solution.

Hardy Girls' programs and materials are being used to support girls' healthy development all over Maine as well as in 38 states and by more than 15,000 people via our mailing lists and networks. Additionally, with our newly launched Training Institute, we've trained more than 400 people in Maine and around the country in our approach to working with girls. This spring, not only are we celebrating Girls Rock Weekend April 9-11th here in Maine but we'll deliver trainings in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Texas.

And because we are always celebrating girls' voices, I want to share, in their words, what girls have said about our work.

According to Kalyn, age 15: *"Because of Hardy Girls Healthy Women I am able to love who I am completely, inside and out and teach others how to as well. I have learned how to take action in the world around me, be a leader, and state my opinions without hesitation. Hardy Girls has shaped me into the strong, independent girl I am today."*

And, some advice from 9-year old Adventure Girl, Seirra: *"If you have a little girl in 2nd-12th grade that thinks she can't do much then send her to Hardy Girls and that'll change her mind quick!"*

So, with this awesome validation of our work, both this award and the testimonials of our very own Hardy Girls, we plow ahead. There is so much work still to be done and we'll continue to do it alongside the girls of Maine - a group that has so much untapped potential, but is no doubt Maine's future.

Thank you.

14 common street, p.o. box 821
waterville, me 04903-0821
207.861.8131 tel • 207.615.0514 fax
www.hghw.org • info@hghw.org

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Committee Members**

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