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Published January 21st, 2008

Celebrating Sisterhood in a Middle School Jungle

By Sarah Mohamed



Sister-to-Sister Photo Sophie Braccini

Saturday, March 7th will mark the 10th anniversary of the American Association of University Women's annual Sister to Sister Summit. The Summit is a one-day conference run by high school girls for middle school girls from JM, OIS, Stanley, and WCI and the emphasis is to celebrate being a girl. It includes games, discussion groups, motivational speakers, crafts, and food. This year's Summit is jungle-themed and will be held at Orinda Intermediate School.

Middle school presents trying experiences for many developing pre-teens and people often rush to AAUW coordinators to ask for the underlying message of the Summit. One needs to look no further than the attendees themselves. When asked what she thought the importance of a Summit for girls was, JM 8th grader Mina Lucacher explained, "Having a group of people to talk to takes the day-to-day pressure away." Lucacher added that girl-talk is important "because it's not good to bottle things up." Lucacher has participated in the summit twice, as has fellow JM 8th grader Sarah Vaughan. Vaughan gave her thoughts on having a summit for girls: "I think maybe it's because girls have always had a harder time; I mean boys just have to put on sweats and a t-shirt and they can leave the house-with girls, there's a lot more stress and having a Summit helps because it's nice to get guidance and hear what everybody else's problems are."

When signing up for the Summit, girls are asked to specify the discussion groups they would most like to participate in. Some of the topics include relationships, body image, cliques, bullying, peer pressure and families. It may

seem like a large feat to get a bunch of reserved middle-schoolers together and ask them to delve into their personal lives. However, the young women feel better able to express themselves since it is a girls-only event. "You put me into a room with a bunch of boys and ask me to talk about my feelings and I won't say a word. Having just girls present helps communication. The high school girls help move things along. If parents were running the Summit, I'd probably fall asleep, you know? We get the same from teachers every day," said Vaughn.

As the registration period opens up, facilitators will be visiting the middle schools to tell girls about the Summit and to provide brochures. Often, the girls worry that buddies will not be attending with them, but Lucacher made it clear that friendships can be made at the Summit: "I met a few people that I stayed in touch with through text and email." After all, who says that a few games, some slices of pizza, and a profound discussion of body image can't bring any two 12 year olds together?

The 2009 Sister-to-Sister Summit will be held on Saturday March 7th from 9-3:30. The Cost is \$30 and includes lunch and a t-shirt. Registration deadline is February 28th. For questions regarding registration, call (925) 942-0102. For more information visit

www.aauwoml.org.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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