

July 2009

# Oasis for girls

Cultivating Generations of Strong and Creative Leaders

## Dear Rachel,

It's the middle of July, and our summer programming is in full swing. Oasis For Girls provides programs every summer, of course, but this year we're trying something different: We've created a common theme underlying each of our summer programs, and we'll culminate the summer with a collaborative event involving all three summer programs.

And the unifying theme for this inaugural effort is both simple and powerful: It's the idea of *love*.



This summer, thirty-five girls engaged in our RISE, Arts Apprenticeship, and Leadership Institute programs are exploring various aspects of love. In the RISE program, girls are examining the ways that loving themselves can support them in making healthy life decisions. At the same time, Arts Apprenticeship participants are exploring the role of revolutionary love as a catalyst for change in the world. And for the girls in the Leadership Institute, the focus is on media exploitation and its effects on love in relationships.

Although the choice of this theme originated with the Arts Apprenticeship program, it has flowed, driven by the girls, to our other two summer programs, resonating deeply with all of the participants.

Each program will also develop a product based on the theme of love: for RISE, it will be a guide to loving oneself; Arts Apprenticeship participants will produce a spoken word performance; and the Leadership Institute will create a film. These will be showcased in August at an event hosted by *Brava! for Women in the Arts*.

It's fitting that the idea of love has been chosen as the theme for our programs this summer. After all, love and acceptance -- of oneself and others -- is at the core of everything we do here at Oasis. We believe that girls who love and value themselves will feel free to express themselves, make healthy life choices, voice their opinions, and become leaders in their communities.



So while "love" may be the word of the moment here at Oasis this summer, we use it as a foundation for our work all year round.

The final event for all three programs is scheduled for Thursday, August 13, 6:00 to 8:00 PM, at the Brava Theater Center in San Francisco. I hope to see you there!

And as always, thanks for reading!

Jessica Van Tuyl, MSW, Interim Executive Director  
Oasis For Girls

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## A Wish List!

We've got a great new home, and we'd welcome a hand in furnishing it.

No gift is too small - we've got a lot of shopping to do!

Can you help? We've established an online wish list at Target to make it easy.

[View our wish list here.](#)

## It's Easy to Donate Right Now!

Want to help support the advancement and capacity of the girls and young women of our community?

Just click the "Donate Now" button, below, and you'll join the ranks of supporters helping us to help shape our collective future!



## Quick Links

### Oasis For Girls website

Here's our new address:

Oasis For Girls  
245-11th Street, 3rd floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Phone: 415-701-7991  
Fax: 415-701-0131  
[sfoasis.org](http://sfoasis.org)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

## Mixing Art & Politics - Spotlight on the Arts Apprenticeship Program

Some artists manage to combine art and social change in their work every once in a while -- but in Oasis For Girls' Arts Apprenticeship program, that combination is par for the course.

The Arts Apprenticeship program, which began in 2006, does more than provide girls with access to arts education. The Arts Apprenticeship program takes it a step further, enabling participants to work closely with a variety of professional artists for an extended period.

Designed for 14- to 18-year-old girls, this eight-week summer program is limited to ten girls. Entry requirements are stiff; girls must submit a written application and undergo an in-person interview to be considered for the program. Program graduates are rewarded not just with an in-depth arts education, but with a \$400 program-completion stipend, as well.



This summer, the Arts Apprenticeship program is collaborating with *Brava! For Women in the Arts*, a professional arts organization committed to producing, presenting, and cultivating live art celebrating the intersection of feminism and multiculturalism to ignite social changes and build community. Under the guidance of a Brava! artist -- specifically, professional spoken-word and hip-hop theater artist Irene Faye Duller -- the girls are developing a play to be performed at the historic Brava! Theater Center in August.

And this is more than just a bunch of kids putting on a play in Grandma's basement. Each Arts Apprenticeship session focuses on a politically- or culturally-inspired theme, and this year is no exception. With the recent uproar over Proposition 8 in mind, the girls and artists chose the topic of "revolutionary love." "We're exploring ideas such as self-love, internalized oppression, and sexism, as well as sisterhood love and love for one's community" says Program Coordinator Julia Eden Ris. "We're looking at how revolutionary love can be used for transformative change in the world and in ourselves."

But revolutionary love is hardly the first controversial topic to be examined in the Arts Apprenticeship program. Previous sessions have focused on topics as diverse as the war in Iraq and genetically modified foods, with participants creating works of art that examine each theme and allow the girls to explore and express their opinions on the subject. The mode of artistic expression also changes from year to year. "We try to alternate between the visual arts and the performing arts, to provide young women with the opportunity to gain artistic skills in a variety of mediums," says Ris.

Activism also plays a big part in the program, with the girls taking on an action project related to each year's theme. This year's project will be based on relationships and love. The program participants will choose from three different topics: love across ethnic and racial lines (and the history of interracial marriage); Proposition 8; and the intersection of love, family, and immigration. According to Ris, "The activism and political education aspect of the program provides the girls with the opportunity to develop the skills needed to create change and become leaders in their community."

So what changes, if any, are in the works for the Arts Apprenticeship program? Given today's critical lack of arts education in public schools, Ris would love to conduct more sessions each year, if funding can be found. "We'd also like to create a second-level arts program" for graduates of the original program, says Ris. "We would cover topics such as how to create a portfolio, how to write an artist statement, how to apply to art school, and how to uplift your community through the arts, plus we'd have even more one-on-one time with the teaching artists."

However the program evolves over time, you can be sure that its participants will be using the arts as a way to make their voices heard loud and clear.

## Why I Volunteer - A Profile of Oasis Volunteer Freya Bernardo

Volunteers are a vital element in most nonprofit organizations, and while all volunteers are appreciated, once in a while you run across one who's outstanding. Oasis has just such a volunteer in Freya Bernardo.

Currently a graduate student at San Francisco State University studying equity and social justice in education, Freya learned of Oasis For Girls through one of her professors, who suggested it might be a good place to conduct her thesis research. "I ended up changing my thesis subject, but I decided to still volunteer," she recalls. After volunteering throughout the Spring 2009 semester, Freya wanted to continue after the term's end, but wasn't quite sure if Oasis still needed her. An encouraging conversation with Interim Executive Director Jessica Van Tuyl dispelled her doubts, and she's continued to volunteer ever since.



During the past six months, Freya has volunteered in a number of programs, including Studio Oasis and the Leadership Institute. She's also involved with the evolving Member program. "I basically serve as an adult ally to Jah'Torri Bettis [a youth staff member], and assist in executing events for Oasis alumni to help maintain community and connections among girls who have been through the three core programs," says Freya.

Asked what she most enjoys about volunteering at Oasis, Freya expresses her pleasure in getting to know and interact with the girls. "Learning from their life experiences is an irreplaceable experience for me," she says. "Learning what other people have been through is an education itself."

She applauds the organization's goal of bringing more girls to serve as staff members and involving them in efforts such as the Measure Up evaluation project. "Oasis staff do a really great job of valuing the voice of the youth," she says.

And does she think Oasis is making an impact in the community? Absolutely, she replies quickly. She leads the organization's emphasis on bringing social justice and activism to girls in high school. "I can definitely tell Oasis is making a difference....we discuss complex issues that don't otherwise get addressed at the high school level."

She also cites empowerment as an important impact of Oasis's work. "Oasis provides leadership opportunities and education for young women of color, who are rarely seen as leaders in society. Oasis does so in a way that validates and promotes the young women's unique qualities. Oasis doesn't use an 'assimilation' model of leadership training."

As for her future plans, Freya would like to teach elementary school after graduating from San Francisco State. She says she'll always have a special place in her heart for Oasis. "I love volunteering here, and I love all the people who are involved. I've learned so much about the world and life through the relationships I have built with the other staff and young women leaders," she says. "Oasis is truly, truly a special place."

## Upcoming Events

- Monday, July 20, 6:30-8:00 pm: Family Night
- Thursday, July 30th, 3:30-5:00 pm: Career Networking Night
- Thursday, August 13, 6:00-8:00 pm: Final Summer Event at the Brava Theater Center

*All events are open to the public and are located at Oasis For Girls, 245-11th Street, Third floor, San Francisco (unless otherwise indicated).*

*Please join us!*