



PACE and Extraordinary Women Leading Change: Advancing Young Women to Become Leaders

When Giselle Cheminand was introduced to the PACE Center for Girls by Ginger Martin, she saw a unique partnership in the making.

What if the movement Cheminand founded, Extraordinary Women Leading Change, could help guide and mentor PACE Center's at-risk, teen-age girls toward better life paths and improved decision making?

That's just what's happened. By working closely with PACE, Extraordinary Women Leading Change's Executive board, Cheminand, Mary Zalaznik and other women leaders work with PACE Center regularly to lead and support the young ladies. What's more, each year a portion of the proceeds from the annual Extraordinary Women Leading Change conference go to support PACE.

Jinique is one of those young ladies. As a sophomore at a local public high school, she skipped school, hung out with the wrong crowd, even argued with her mother and ran away from home a few times.



Jinique

One day, her guidance counselor told Jinique she had to go to an "alternative school." Given her options, the 17-year-old chose PACE Center for Girls in Wilton Manors.

That was Spring of 2015. Today,

Jinique has turned her academic and social life around. She has made friends, been named to the PACE's House Council, and was scheduled to return to public school in the Fall as a changed young woman.

"I wasn't a bad kid, I just made bad decisions," she admits. "I needed a chance to turn it around."

For more than 80 at-risk, middle and high school aged young women, that chance comes at the PACE Center for Girls. They arrive with issues of belonging and trust, truancy, alienation from family, even drug use and other high-risk behaviors. By discussing empowerment, self-esteem, and focusing on their futures, the girls and staff work to turn their lives around, says Aggie Pappas, the center's Executive Director.

"There's a lot of reflecting that takes place in this process," Pappas says. "We've all been there in adolescence, when you feel nobody understands me, I'm not that important. We help them work through that."

In a unique relationship, created through a mentorship program envisioned by Cheminand and led by Mary Zalaznik, leaders from "Extraordinary Women Leading Change" movement visit the PACE Center regularly to mentor and coach the girls.

"They discuss their challenges, provide guidance and serve as role models and examples of what may lie before them", says Mary Zalaznik, Senior VP of Operations with VITAS Healthcare Corporation, Executive Board Member of Extraordinary Women Leading Change and Chair of its PACE mentorship committee.

Zalaznik and Cheminand lead monthly mentorship and coaching sessions throughout the year to address life's challenges, leadership qualities and workplace opportunities. The subjects vary, and include the critical topic of how trust builds personal success.

Over time, Extraordinary Women Leading Change volunteers see the girls

develop stronger relationships with each other and begin focusing on their futures.



Aggie Pappas

"It was moving for us. We were blown away by the mature insights some of these girls have. They were helping each other with trust issues and we could see that developing," Zalaznik recalls. "We get so much more than we give, because it's amazing to see them open up."

Like young women before her, Jinique was a model of transformation. She embraced what PACE and Extraordinary Women Leading Change were offering, turned her personal, social and academic life around, and became a model student.

Jinique recently earned the "Heart of Gold Award," the center's most prestigious award for the student who best exhibits the organization's values and principles.

"Jinique discovered there were people here who would help her reach her goals and those are the relationships she put her energy into," says Karyn Keil, PACE Program Operations Manager. "When I think of her, I think of an empowered young woman who has found her voice and has great potential in finding her place in the world. I truly believe Jinique will

make her mark on the world in a very positive way."

This fall, Jinique will return to her home school. After spending time with Extraordinary Women Leading Change leadership, and participating in the "Young Women's Mentorship for Leading Change" movement, she has future goals and dreams she's ready to pursue. Her short term goals are to pursue her love of cosmetology or cooking. She'd like to later enroll in college and potentially become a pediatrician.

Her relationship with her mother has dramatically improved, and she now tries to help her younger sister navigate the same challenging world that Jinique once faced. After all, Jinique is still that same good kid she was before. Now, she's a more focused young woman.



Mary Zalaznik

"I still have the same dreams I had before, but they were slowly fading away. Now, they're back and high as ever," says Jinique, who credits her experience to the PACE organization and the mentorship efforts and contributions of the Extraordinary Women Leading Change movement. "They give you good skills you can use in life. Most people don't get those skills until later on in life, so it was like getting a head start on adulthood."