

EWLC Mentoring Girls From PACE

To Expand Their Leadership Skills & Aspirations

Many people believe mentoring at-risk youth helps the protégés see the possibilities in themselves and aspire to a brighter future. Mary V. Zalaznik has seen changes in the girls she's worked with – and herself.



Mary V. Zalaznik

She recalls working with a normally reserved and private girl at the PACE Center for Girls, where Zalaznik mentors young women in her role as chairwoman for

the “Young Women Mentorship for Leading Change” committee alongside program founder Giselle Cheminand. Having been given an assignment at the previous session, the girl volunteered to be first to share her work.

Even her peers were proud.

“The other girls around the table all looked at her, with those encouraging, ‘That a girl!’ looks.” We all enjoyed that huge progress,” recalls Zalaznik, senior VP with VITAS Healthcare and a four-year member of EWLC. “I do this because I am very grateful every day for the leadership and mentoring that I have been so privileged to receive throughout my career.”

Mentoring is one of the many programs PACE Center provides young women in Broward, and now in Miami-Dade County. Its girl-centered culture celebrates the power and potential of girls in 19 non-residential centers throughout Florida. It provides middle and high school aged girls academics and social services in a program nationally recognized as one of the most effective for helping at-risk girls realize brighter and more productive futures.

Now in its fifth year collaborating on mentoring with Extraordinary Women Leading Change, PACE has seen countless girls learn, grow more confident, and succeed, says Aggie Pappas, PACE regional executive director.



Aggie Pappas

“We’re seeing great benefits with the girls going through the program,” she says. “They’ve gained communication skills, they’re engaged in conversations, they

think about their career path. They’re just more mature and thinking about adulthood. We’re definitely making great strides.”

One student making great strides is Sanae. Like many of her peers there, Sanae had fallen in the wrong crowd – skipping school and worrying her father about the path she was on.

“I’m not a bad kid. I just made bad choices. And if I stayed on that path, I wouldn’t have graduated,” she says. “I realized I was getting another chance I wouldn’t get anywhere else.”



Sanae

Sanae enrolled in January 2017 and soon was finding her way. Working with PACE counselors and EWLC mentors, the nervousness she felt with her first encounter

blossomed into confidence. Now, after several monthly meetings with EWLC mentors, Sanae sees them as role models who help her understand how to help herself.

Today, Sanae is thoughtful and respectful young women whose

voice is strong, her thoughts are clear and her future is bright. She hopes to maybe become a nurse anesthetist.

“Since I’ve been in PACE, I’ve improved my grades, my emotional life, and my family life,” she says. “It’s so very worth the investment – to me and my whole family. They want to see me succeed.”



Sherry Thompson Giordano

The year-long EWLC mentorship program have been very successful in Broward. Such success propelled the expansion to PACE Miami. EWLC launched the

mentoring initiative with the support of Sherry Thompson Giordano, executive director of PACE Center for Girls Miami. The girls who are interviewed and selected for the program enjoy the experience and are realizing their fullest potential, she says.

“They want to grow, change, and understand the opportunities there are for them,” says Giordano, who this year like last, will take several girls to this year’s EWLC conference. “They are in awe of the successful women they see there. They were taking notes of what every speaker was saying. It’s that unbridled and genuine desire to learn that our program and EWLC founder Giselle Cheminand just brings that out.”

When EWLC mentor Shana S. Crittenden looks into the faces of her mentees, she often sees a reflection of herself as a high schooler. Looking back at her are teen-age girls who wonder about their place – and future – in a scary world.



Shana S. Crittenden

“I see myself in them,” says Crittenden, COO of North Shore Medical Center in Miami and EWLC’s PACE Miami lead. “I look at them and say, ‘I was once in your shoes. I came

through the same neighborhood as you came from.’ Looking at them, I remember the mentors I had in my life who helped me. And I want to do the same thing for these young women.”



Donna Borland

Added PACE mentor and VITAS general manager Donna Borland, “It’s an amazing and humbling experience to share my personal stories of growth and success. By

spending time regularly with young women in our community, I listen to their challenges and perceived weaknesses. I am able to coach and help them improve their self-esteem. It’s a great reward.”

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- Mary V. Zalaznik, VITAS Healthcare