

Courage.
Community.
Climbing.



What is Girls Rock!?

Now in its 16th year, Girls Rock! is a 10-week after school mentoring program in which middle school girl participants (ages 11-14) build a diverse, supportive community through leadership, service and rock climbing. Participants are paired 1 on 1 with an adult female mentor and together build a positive relationship, using climbing as a metaphor and vehicle to inspire courage and leadership. Girls Rock! began in 1997 as part of the independent non-profit Passages Northwest, which has since merged to become part of the Metrocenter YMCA of Greater Seattle.

The program runs for 10 weeks in the spring and 10 weeks in the fall. Mentors attend 3 days of training before the session, all program dates, and 2 planning and debriefing dinners. Our spring session starts in the beginning of February and the fall session starts in the beginning of September.

What are the activities?

We kick off our program with an all-day low ropes course designed to build community and introduce girls and mentors to each other. The next week, like every Wednesday during the session, we meet at Seattle's Vertical World Climbing Gym. At the gym, the girls and mentors meet briefly to check-in and eat snacks, then come together for a community-building or courage-focused activity, often followed by a climbing mini-lesson. Then girls have time with their mentors to develop relationships and practice climbing skills before we all meet in our closing circle, led by our girl Leader of the Day. Each week, the girls also participate in ongoing community-building and leadership exercises, called the Courage Project, often oriented around the arts to reflect on their experience and grow their skills and courage as leaders. As part of this ongoing project, the girls will choose, plan and organize a service project benefitting other girls in the Seattle community.

Roughly midway through the 10 weeks, we spend a weekend outside. We camp, participate in an arts and community activities, and give outdoor rock climbing a try.

Girls Rock! culminates in a graduation celebration during which participants show their accomplishments to their friends and family and even teach them a bit about climbing.

Is this a climbing team or climbing club?

No—it's much more. We believe the unique metaphors present in climbing, when explored in conjunction with the Courage Project, ignite leadership potential in girls and will inspire them to create a vision for a better world. Girls Rock! seeks to develop technical climbing skills in girls, but our priority is empowering them as courageous leaders. Some girls come to this program excited to climb hard and high, some may be scared to even get on the wall. ALL girls challenge themselves through the Girls Rock! program, track their climbing progress, and set goals. We strive to meet each girl where she is in this challenge-by-choice program.

On the other hand, mentors and GR! staff have often created an informal climbing club for themselves, whether an early weekday morning Rise and Climb weekly meet-ups, or climbing together after each Girls Rock! session in the gym.

Mentor Benefits

*“Girls Rock! has encouraged my climbing to new heights—
I am stoked all over again, because of such an amazing community!
AND—the courage from this program has leaked into other areas of my life... Thank you!”
--Mentor, Spring 2011*

- Chance to share your love of climbing with youth
- Opportunity to give back to your community and build a unique relationship with a girl
- Access to an amazing, supportive community of adult women and climbing partners
- Free training in institutional rock climbing skills, youth facilitation skills, leadership skills and risk management
- Free membership to Vertical World Climbing Gym while the program is in session

Mentor Requirements

- Full commitment to attending ALL of the dates listed, arriving on time and staying for the whole session
- Great passion for working with youth
- Strong skills or experience working with diverse youth or girls
- Passion for and interest in rock climbing
- Climbing skills or experience*: especially belaying, top-rope, and sport lead climbing.
*If you are a new climber and willing to make time outside the program to develop your climbing skills, our staff will support you

Questions? Feel free to email or call our Program Assistant, Laura Shapiro, at lshapiro@seattleyymca.org or 206-839-8918. If this program seems a good fit for you, please fill out the Mentor Application and email, fax or mail it to Laura by August 10, 2011. We will review applications and fill mentoring positions by August 22. You can expect to hear back from us by then.

Thank you for your interest in Girls Rock! We look forward to hearing from you.

Jenni Conrad

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