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## Women band together to mentor girls through InspireHer

By [Julie Muhlstein](#), Herald Columnist

Noni LaLone was the first person in her family with a college degree. Her father, 17 when she was born, didn't graduate from high school.

Today, LaLone is a partner in the Everett office of a major accounting, tax and consulting firm. She also heads a steering committee to launch InspireHer, a new effort to help girls build successful lives and careers.

“My upbringing was not [‘Leave It to Beaver.’](#)” said LaLone, who works at [Moss Adams LLP](#). “A lot of people helped me along the way. I want to do for others what people did for me.”

LaLone told her story at a breakfast Wednesday at the Everett Golf & Country Club. Women were invited to learn how they could help with InspireHer, as mentors, planners or donors.

[Boys & Girls Clubs of Snohomish County](#) will be the home of InspireHer, which is sponsored by Moss Adams. There is a similar program in King County, [InfluenceHer](#), but LaLone said the grass-roots effort here is distinct to Snohomish County.

Women invited to Wednesday's event were “hand-picked” as role models and potential mentors by InspireHer organizers, LaLone said. Seventy women attended the breakfast. And \$4,600 was raised to provide girls with memberships to local Boys & Girls Clubs and for special programming.

InspireHer will target girls ages 8 to 18. The goal is to foster success in three areas: career and academic achievement, character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles.

Guests watched a trailer to [“Miss Representation.”](#) a 2011 documentary film that explores portrayals of girls and women in popular culture.

Jennifer Sibel Newsom's film and the “Miss Representation” [website](#) list these and other discouraging statistics, drawn from various sources: One in four teen girls experience dating violence; between 1937 and 2005, animated films featured only 13 female protagonists, and all but one aspired to find romance; by age 17, 78 percent of girls are unhappy with their bodies; women make up 51 percent of the U.S. population but only 20 percent of Congress.

Snohomish County Superior Court [Judge Marybeth Dingledey](#), part of the group that has helped get InspireHer off the ground, was one of three women who spoke Wednesday about the areas of emphasis.

“It’s critical for girls to get involved in community service,” said Dingley, who talked about the character and citizenship aspect of InspireHer. She mentioned volunteer opportunities at an animal shelter as one possible way to get girls involved in their community.

Spotlighting the emphasis on career and academics, [Edmonds Community College](#) business instructor Mary Heffernan Trester spoke about a program that encourages girls to explore engineering careers.

And Jenny Keeney, another Moss Adams employee, talked about healthy lifestyles. Sports and other physical activities boost self-confidence along with fitness, she said. InspireHer programs may include running clubs and yoga classes, as well as fun ways to encourage smart eating habits.

Mentors will be the program’s key. By sharing the examples of their lives, women will help open doors for the next generation.

The film “Miss Representation” has a motto. It was borrowed from the [White House Project](#), a group founded by Marie Wilson to push for more women in leadership roles. That motto, pointing to the need for role models, also fits InspireHer: “You can’t be what you can’t see.”

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Learn more

Find out more about InspireHer, a program for school-age girls being launched at Boys & Girls Clubs of Snohomish County: <http://bgcsc.org/get-involved/inspireher/>

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