



WHAT IS WRITEGIRL?

WriteGirl is a creative writing and mentoring program for at-risk teen girls in Los Angeles.

Through mentoring, workshops, performances and publications girls are given techniques and insights for creative writing in all genres from professional women writers.

Women and girls support, encourage and challenge each other to express their ideas and dreams on paper and out loud.

WriteGirl was launched in December 2001 by Keren Taylor. From an initial group of 40 women and girls, WriteGirl has grown to a membership of over 200.

WriteGirl is a project of nonprofit incubator, Community Partners (www.communitypartners.org)

OUR PROGRAM

- **Weekly one-on-one mentoring** with professional women writers
- **Monthly creative writing workshops** exploring poetry, journalism, fiction and more
- **Public readings and special events** throughout Los Angeles
- **Publication of an annual anthology** distributed nationwide.

OUR GOALS

- **Teach a robust set of writing and critical analysis skills**
- **Encourage girls to explore and develop their creative talents, both written and oral**
- **Equip girls with communication skills to confidently navigate the challenges they face**
- **Nurture girls and promote healthy behaviors and life choices through positive mentoring relationships**
- **Prepare girls for college**

WRITEGIRL PUBLICATIONS

Each season, WriteGirl publishes an annual anthology of writing from all members. WriteGirl's 5th anthology, "Untangled," is now available on Amazon.com.



OUR GIRLS

- Girls participate from more than 20 high schools throughout the Los Angeles region.
- Girls come from some of the highest density schools in the country.
- These girls face a drop out rate of 50% at their schools.

WRITEGIRL WORKS!

100% of WriteGirls graduate from high school and go on to college!

CONTACT WRITEGIRL

Contact WriteGirl through our website, www.writegirl.org or call us at 323-363-1287.



WriteGirl Program Elements

ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING

WriteGirl mentors are novelists, poets, songwriters, screenwriters, marketing & public relations professionals, editors, journalists, story analysts and more. These women share their expertise and passion for creative writing with teenage girls in weekly, one-hour sessions over a nine-month season (October through June).

Mentoring relationships offer girls a powerful and consistent relationship with someone outside their homes and schools. Girls gain valuable communication skills for a lifetime of increased opportunities.

WORKSHOPS

Imagine over 120 women and girls all in one room writing! WriteGirl's full-day, monthly group workshops are based on creative and interactive approaches within a standards-based curriculum.

Mentor, mentees, volunteers, and special guests enjoy a day of inspiration, empowerment, fun, creativity and WRITING. At WriteGirl workshops girls explore such powerful themes as **identity, family, community, cultures, and the world at large.**

Past special guests include:

- Geena Davis, Academy Award-winning actress and founder of See Jane, which explores gender equality in media
- Kirstin Smith, screenwriter, Legally Blonde
- Sarah Fain and Liz Craft, writers for television's The Shield
- Ann Taylor Fleming, a journalist whose credits include CNN, The New York Times and Newsweek
- Abigail Goldman, Pulitzer Prize-winning Los Angeles Times journalist
- Melissa Manchester, Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter



READINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

WriteGirl produces 15 large and small events annually to share members' work with family, friends and the community. Public readings help girls develop oral presentation skills and confidence speaking in public.

Portrait of a Bookstore in Studio City, Skylight Books in Los Feliz, Dutton's in Beverly Hills, and Book Soup in West Hollywood host WriteGirl readings each year. WriteGirl also has a presence at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, UCLA Writers Faire, the California Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women, the West Hollywood Book Fair and Feria del Libro.

The WriteGirl season culminates with a celebration at the Writer's Guild Theater in Beverly Hills, where WriteGirls and special guests share their work onstage. This sold-out event brings together government officials, members of the literary and education communities, film and television executives and WriteGirl supporters.



The Word on WriteGirl

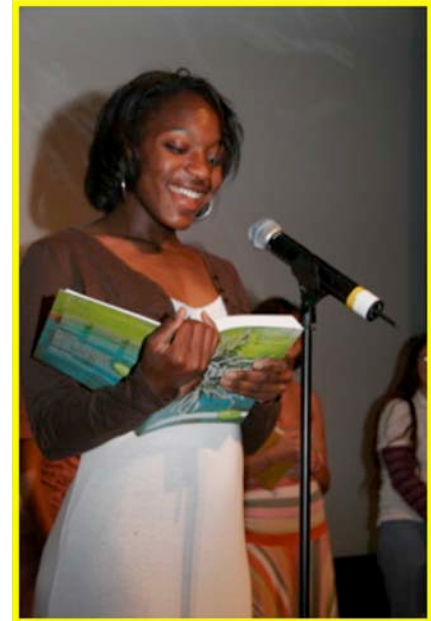
FROM MENTEES:

“At WriteGirl, I clear my mind of anything negative, gather up my inspiration, and let loose with my pen.”

“WriteGirls let go of any judgments or fears. We write about our thoughts, we take advantage of words, and we’re surrounded by amazing women who share the same love for writing.”

“The first time I read a piece out loud, I got so much support! I love my mentor. WriteGirl makes me feel at home.”

“This program has helped me develop not only my skills as a writer, but also as a woman in a man-dominated world.”



GEENA DAVIS

Academy Award-winning actress and founder of See Jane:

“Seeing WriteGirl in action was a truly amazing experience - these girls are empowered and finding their voices. What a gift this program is to their lives.”



FROM MENTORS:

“I love WriteGirl and the women who run it so very much. It’s been the single best thing about moving to L.A., and I’m so thankful my neighbor told me about it and I applied. It really does fill me with joy and satisfaction. I don’t know how to thank you all, I really don’t. But I’m thinking if I make millions, I know exactly where to donate!!!!”

“In their shining eyes, I see their future as leaders, women of strength and purpose.”

“The energy here could light up all of LA for a week! So glad to be a part of WriteGirl!”

Empowering girls through mentorship and self-expression





Calendar of Events

2006 – 2007 SEASON 6

August through October, 2006

Volunteer Recruitment and Training Sessions

October 12, 2006

Membership Kick-Off

October 21, 2006

MENTOR RETREAT

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

(Members Only)

SATURDAYS, 12pm – 4pm
Exposition Park Intergenerational
Community Center (EPICC)

November 4, 2006
Match Day

December 9, 2006
Creative Nonfiction

January 20, 2007
Poetry

February 17, 2007
Fiction

March 17, 2007
Journalism

April 14, 2007
Songwriting

May 12, 2007
Dialogue and Character

June 16, 2007
Performance

PUBLIC EVENTS

UCLA WRITERS FAIRE
September 11, 2006

WEST HOLLYWOOD BOOK FAIR
Stop by our info booth, and catch us onstage!
September 17, 2006

**GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE
ON WOMEN & FAMILIES**
September 26, 2006

VIP BOOK LAUNCH
SPONSORED BY NBC/UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL STUDIOS
December 5, 2006

BOOK SOUP
OFFICIAL BOOK LAUNCH PARTY FOR UNTANGLED!
WEST HOLLYWOOD
December 10, 2006

SKYLIGHT BOOKS
LOS FELIZ
February 24, 2007

LOS ANGELES TIMES FESTIVAL OF BOOKS
April 28 & 29, 2007

DUTTON'S BOOKS
BEVERLY HILLS
March 2007

SEASON END GALA EVENT
WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA THEATER
June 23, 2007



WriteGirl's Annual Anthology

Since 2001, WriteGirl Publications has been producing award-winning anthologies that showcase the bold voices and imaginative insights of women and girls. Unique in both design and content, WriteGirl anthologies present a wide range of personal stories, poetry, essays, scenes and lyrics, as well as a selection of WriteGirl writing experiments to inspire readers to find their own creative voices.

New from WriteGirl Publications:

UNTANGLED: Stories & Poetry from the Women and Girls of WriteGirl
PENS ON FIRE: Creative Writing Experiments for Teens from WriteGirl

Also from WriteGirl Publications:

NOTHING HELD BACK: Truth & Fiction from WriteGirl
PIECES OF ME: The Voices of WriteGirl
BOLD INK: Collected Voices of Women and Girls
THREADS



2006 Best Books Award-winner, **UNTANGLED**, receives accolades:

"The writing here, always moving and sometimes painful, displays freshness, an exuberant inventiveness, and - surprisingly - a hard-won wisdom."

– Benjamin Schwarz, Editor, The Atlantic

Praise for 2006 Writers Notes Magazine Book Award Finalist and 2006 Independent Publisher Award Honorable Mention, **NOTHING HELD BACK:**

"The fourth annual anthology from WriteGirl...suggests that reports of literacy's death have been greatly exaggerated, that language remains a transformative force. For these girls (and their mentors), writing is a lens, a filter, a way to cut through the nonsense and see the possibilities."

– David Ulin, Book Editor, Los Angeles Times

Raves for 2005 Independent Publisher Award Anthology Finalist, **PIECES OF ME:**

"Wow! I couldn't stop reading this. Talk about goosebumps! This book will shock you - and make you think - and make you FEEL - all at the same time!"

– R.L. STINE

Glass

And if we cracked seashells at dawn we would be better people.
We would look into ourselves, about ourselves, under our
Fingernails and broken body parts for that missing
Shard of conch or cerith.
And if you found that dried mussel under your white bed sheet,
The sun would come up over our dead city.
Like the time my grandmother sliced her foot on a piece of sea glass,
We will bleed into the ocean and the sand and the salt will sting.

-- Zoe Beyer, age 17

In The Field

As he raises his face up
The sun's rays make him sweat.
Tired and angry he looks out at
The whole space with nothing
To gaze upon.

-- Yanet Prospero, age 15



WriteGirl Mentees



Members of WriteGirl have achieved some incredible things, all linked to the development of strong writing skills and working with their mentors.

Congratulations to the 14 WriteGirls attending college this fall at the following schools:

Cal State University, Los Angeles
Glendale Community College
Los Angeles City College
Mills College
Pasadena City College
Reed College
San Francisco State University
Santa Barbara City College
Santa Monica City College
UC Berkeley
UC Davis
UC Santa Cruz

Lovely Umayam, one of the founding members of WriteGirl, developed her creative voice over the course of five seasons with the group. Lovely just started Reed College on a full scholarship and plans to study international relations and journalism.

Stephanie Almendarez struggled in high school and dropped out when she was discouraged. With the guidance of WriteGirl, working closely with her mentor, she passed the GED exam, received her high school diploma and enrolled in a local community college this fall. Her college schedule includes a creative writing class, which is already her favorite.

Iris Benitez wrote such a compelling letter that acclaimed author Sandra Cisneros agreed to fly in from Texas to speak at the Belmont High School graduation ceremony. Iris introduced Sandra before a crowd of 5,000. Iris first read Sandra's acclaimed novel, *The House on Mango Street*, with her WriteGirl mentor, who introduced her to the book. She recently completed her third year at UC Davis.

Lena Brooks won the prestigious Scholastic poetry Award, one of twenty selected nationally out of thousands of high school students. Lena is in her senior year at John Marshall High School.

Jeanine Daniels won honorable mention for her short film script in a Twentieth Century Fox-sponsored contest at the Communication Arts Academy at Hamilton High School. Jeanine was awarded a full scholarship to Pitzer College and is currently in China doing study abroad.

Perla Melendez participated in the prestigious California State Summer School for the Arts (CSSSA), held on the campus of the California Institute of the Arts. Perla, author of two poetry chapbooks, participates in the Creative Writing program at UC Santa Barbara.



WriteGirl Mentors

WriteGirl mentors include accomplished journalists, novelists, poets, TV and film writers, songwriters, marketing executives, and editors with the *Los Angeles Times*, Paramount Pictures, HBO, Harper-Collins, Disney and Comedy Central, among many many others.

A few highlights include:

Stephanie Allen is working on a collection of poetry and has completed seven screenplays. She currently works as a creative marketing executive at Fox Searchlight Pictures.

Abby Anderson is a screenwriter whose last two scripts made it to the Second Round of Austin Film Festival's screenplay and teleplay competitions.

T. Faye Griffin is a veteran television writer include *The Parent'hood* and the Emmy Award-winning comedy series, *In Living Color*.

Erika Hayasaki is a reporter for *the Los Angeles Times* who covers kids and education. She has won the *Times*' "Best Writing" Award and received this year's American Society of Newspaper Editors prize for team deadline reporting.

Jennifer Hoppe has a TV project in development with Paramount and, in addition, Ridley Scott's company is producing a script she and her partner wrote last year.



Michelle Lewis is a New York singer/songwriter who has written songs for many well-known artists (such as Cher, Shawn Colvin and Michelle Branch) in addition to releasing her own albums. She has recently created a kid's TV show about music which is in development with Disney.

Carolina Paiz is a Guatemalan writer who lives in Los Angeles whose short fiction has appeared in *Zoetrope* and the *Caribbean Writer*. She currently works as a staff writer on *Grey's Anatomy*.

Kim Purcell is the celebrity interviewer for the popular PBS tween website, *It's My Life*, and is currently working on two young adult thrillers.

Deborah Reber is the editor of *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*, *The Real Deal Book 1: School* and the author of *Run for Your Life*, a running guide for women.

Wendy Tigerman has counseled teens in NYC, raised alfalfa sprouts in Berkeley, and written everything from award-winning ad copy to the *Pink Panther* cartoons.

Marlys West published a book of poems, *Notes for a Late-Blooming Martyr*. She also received the NEA grant for poetry.



WriteGirl Expansion

WRITEGIRL IN-SCHOOLS PROGRAM

The WriteGirl In-Schools Program brings innovative creative writing workshops into the classroom. WriteGirl creates a uniquely interactive and stimulating learning environment, so girls don't feel like they are in school. Instead, girls discuss and write about themselves, their communities, their cultures and their futures, investigating social and personal issues while learning the crafts of writing, editing and performance.



As with all WriteGirl programming, curriculum is progressive, with increasing challenges each semester. The curriculum is designed to accommodate a wide range of individual academic abilities, which also allows for new students to be easily integrated into the program.

Each 12-week program culminates with the publication of a small chapbook and a community reading. These elements are rare opportunities for the girls to share their creative work, gain valuable performance skills, and experience concrete outcomes.

WHO WE SERVE

The WriteGirl In-Schools Program is focused on schools in low-income areas with a population of underserved students. These students face a vast number of difficult issues, including pregnancy and motherhood, unstable family circumstances, challenging financial situations and violence in their communities.



WriteGirl is in its second year at Destiny Girls Academy, an alternative Los Angeles County Office of Education high school in South Los Angeles, in partnership with the Girls Collaborative. Two WriteGirl publications showcase writing from these girls: *Look At Me Long Enough* and *Now That I Think About It*. Celebration readings were held at the Ascot Public Library and at the Col. Leon H. Washington Community Center.

COMING UP

This year WriteGirl will bring writing workshops to two more LACOE high schools, the New Village School founded by Paul Cummins in downtown Los Angeles, and Exposition Park Intergenerational Community Center (EPICC) just south of downtown. WriteGirl is currently discussing plans to partner with MentorLA, LAUSD high schools and Camp Scott, a rehabilitation center for incarcerated youth.



WriteGirl Leadership

Writers often say to me, "I wish there was WriteGirl when I was a teenager!" And I share their sentiment. Having a place where you are encouraged to express your emotions and ideas is important at any time in your life, but somehow particularly vital as a teenager, and still (yes, still) especially vital for women.

Here in the world of WriteGirl, we are all about giving girls and women the space, time and encouragement to speak up, speak out, write it down and let their unique voices loose. Some of our girls may go on to pursue careers as writers, but ALL will gain valuable communication skills to help them no matter what they decide to do in their lives.

WriteGirl is for girls, but it is also for women. It is exciting to see women writers develop friendships, make professional connections and help each other through involvement in WriteGirl. Personally, I am constantly surprised, challenged and inspired. As one young girl wrote to me, "WriteGirl should be everywhere, for all girls." And I agree. Let's make that happen!

Warmly,
Keren Taylor
Founder and Executive Director

Bio

Keren Taylor is a songwriter, vocalist, poet, visual artist, event producer and arts educator.

Passionate about inspiring others to cultivate their creative ideas, Keren has conducted more than 150 songwriting, poetry and "Art & Words" workshops in New York and Los Angeles for both children and adults. Keren also "trains the trainers", lecturing and giving workshops for teachers and afterschool educators on literacy programming. She has more than ten years of experience in arts education, media and public relations, sales, marketing, event planning and freelance writing and editing.

Keren has performed her original music across the country in concert halls, theatres, clubs and festivals. She has opened for such acts as Blood, Sweat & Tears, Marvin Hamlisch, Dana Carvey, Frank Sinatra Jr. and Gladys Knight. She spent a year in Las Vegas as one of the featured performers in "Madhattan" a musical production at the New York New York Hotel & Casino.

Her poetry appears in *The San Gabriel Valley Poetry Review*, *Wavelength* and *So Luminous the Wildflowers - An Anthology of California Poetry* from Tebot Bach Press. Her art has been exhibited at the Barnsdall Art Center, Gallery 727, Rock Rose Gallery, Shambhala Center Los Angeles and is in personal collections.

Keren holds a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations from the University of British Columbia, a Piano Performance Degree from the Toronto Royal Conservatory of Music and a Diploma from the American Music and Dramatic Academy, New York City.



WRITEGIRL STAFF

Executive Director

Keren Taylor

Associate Director

Allison Deegan

Program Director

Phoebe Brauer

Program Manager

Sara Shirrell

Administrative Assistant

Jessica Kriynovich

VOLUNTEER TEAM LEADERS

Website & Graphics

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Writing Workshops

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Maia Akiva

Special Events

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Erica Blodgett

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Kelly Merryman

Public Relations

Sarah Leonard

Rachel Wimberly

Book Marketing/Sales

Elizabeth Gill

Mentoring Managers

Amaree Tanawong

Karen Glasser

Mentee Communications

Celeste Perron

Membership

Abby Anderson





WriteGirl Advisory Board

Barbara Abercrombie, Novelist, UCLA Writing Instructor, Lecturer

Shelley Berger, Poet and Beyond Baroque Poetry Teacher

Mark Bisgeier, Entertainment Attorney

Suzie Coelho, Lifestyle expert, Author and HGTV Television Host

Mark Cull, Author and Publisher, Red Hen Press

Araceli De Leon, Vice President and General Manager of KWHY-TV Los Angeles, Independent Spanish-language Canal 22

Allison Deegan, Marketing Consultant, Screenwriter (Strategic Planning Chair)

Kai EL' Zabar, Writer, Editor, Multimedia Consultant

Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey, Novelist

Mollie Gregory, Author, Teacher, Consultant for writers

John Marshall, Vice President-Manufacturing, RR Donnelley

Vickie Nam, Writer, Editor of Yell-Oh Girls (Asian-American teen anthology), Interactive Producer

Maria del Pilar O'Cadiz, Ph.D., Executive Director & Research Specialist /Collaborative After School Project, Cal Poly Pomona

Joy Picus, Former LA Councilwoman, Community Organizer

Cecilia Rasmussen, Writer and Columnist for The Los Angeles Times

Debbie Reber, Author (Publications Chair)

Aleida Rodriguez, Poet, Editor, Educator, Translator, Publisher

Diane Siegel, Museum Educator, Community Organizer, Teacher, Los Angeles Public Library consultant

Keren Taylor, Songwriter, Poet, Visual Artist (Founder and WriteGirl Executive Director)



WriteGirl Supporters

WriteGirl would like to thank the following for their generous support

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The Ahmanson Foundation
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John & Marilyn Wells

And all our generous In-Kind Contributors:

Advisory Board Members for support and guidance on strategy.

All of WriteGirl's mentors and volunteers for commitment and enthusiasm.

Journals and Books from **BrushDance Inc., Cavallini Papers & Co, Chronicle Books, Falling Water, Fiorentina, The Flavia Company, Galison/MudPuppy Press, K. Schweitzer, Kikkerland, New York Times, Peaceable Kingdom** and **Quotable Inc.**

Catering & food donations from **Buddha's Belly, California Pizza Kitchen, Cha Cha Cha, The Farm in Beverly Hills, Fiji Water, Island's, Lost Souls Cafe, Louise's Trattoria, Mijares Mexican Restaurant, Newman's Own, Noah's New York Bagels, Le Pain Quotidian, POMWonderful, Starbucks Coffee, Susina Café and Bakery Trader Joe's, Whole Foods** and **Wildflower Baking Company.**

FedEx Kinko's for photocopying.

Print and Copy Factory for printing.

Fabric Interactive and **Sara Apelkvist** for design and branding strategy.

Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, West Hollywood Book Fair, and Feria del Libro for donating WriteGirl booth space and promotional support at these events.

RR Donnelley for ongoing support.

BioConstructs for ongoing support.

Fox Searchlight Pictures for gifts.

Merrill Lynch for ongoing support.

UCLA Extension Writer's Program for assistance in recruiting mentors and volunteers for WriteGirl through their faculty and student populations.

Writers Guild of America, west and **Writers Guild Foundation** for publicity.

Mark Rose at **Exposition Park Intergenerational Community Center (EPICC)** and **Leslie Perez** at **Yucca Community Center** for workshop space.



WriteGirl welcomes your support

All of our generous funders who have contributed support to our mission and the launch and growth of our program know that a



donation to WriteGirl will make an immediate, measurable and lasting impact on the life of a young girl.

For example:

\$25 provides writing workshop materials, including journals, for 3 girls

\$50 provides comprehensive training manuals for 5 writing mentors

\$100 provides presentation materials for one complete full-day workshop

\$300 provides a nutritious lunch at a WriteGirl workshop for 50 participants

\$500 supports the development and presentation of two full-day workshops

\$1,000 provides a year's worth of writing and research supplies for up to 100 WriteGirl members

\$5,000 provides substantial support for WriteGirl's annual publication and presentation of our work at a public reading

\$10,000 helps sustain WriteGirl as a powerful force for change in our community.

DONATE BY MAIL:

Make checks payable to:
Community Partners FBO
(for the benefit of) WriteGirl

Mail donations to:

WriteGirl
411 South Main Street, #422B
Los Angeles, CA 90013

By credit card:

Please visit our website:
<http://www.writegirl.org>

Our anthologies, *Untangled*, *Nothing Held Back*, *Pieces of Me* and *Bold Ink*, are available on our website (through Paypal) or Amazon.com.



In-Kind Contributions

WriteGirl welcomes your donation of professional services, especially:

- Graphic design
- Printing and Photocopying
- Catering

WriteGirl is a nonprofit project of Community Partners®. (www.communitypartners.org)

Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For more information about supporting WriteGirl, contact Keren Taylor at (323) 327-2555 or info@writegirl.org



WriteGirl Gives the “Write” Answers

Q&A with Keren Taylor, Founder and Executive Director of WriteGirl

Q: When did WriteGirl start and what was its genesis?

Taylor: As a songwriter, poet, and freelance writer, I appreciate the power and versatility of the craft of language. While living in New York City, I helped establish a creative writing and mentoring organization for girls and I saw first-hand what a tremendous impact it had on both the girls and the women involved – giving them self-confidence, new skills, new friends, and expanding their dreams and goals. When I moved to Los Angeles, I wanted to continue to combine my love of writing with my community work. I put a notice out by email to various writers groups, gathered an initial leadership group of about 10 women, and launched WriteGirl in December 2001. It helped that I had just been made a casualty of the dot-com crash – suddenly I had time and peace to think about going in a whole new direction. Starting a nonprofit was not only appealing in terms of making a contribution to the community, but it challenged me to apply all my business and creative skills. I’m always up for a good challenge.



Q: How did you decide on the program elements (i.e., weekly one-on-one mentoring, monthly workshops, publishing books, etc.)?

Taylor: The program is designed to encourage self-expression and communication in several ways: weekly one-on-one sessions with a mentor, monthly writing workshops for all members (more than 150 women and girls in one room!), and the sharing of work at public readings and in our annual publication. We’ve created a safe, supportive environment that cultivates strong communication skills. Curriculum is developed by our own experts and we work hard to keep the program lively, engaging, and relevant to the lives of our members, as well as aligned with academic standards and goals. Over a nine-month period, roughly corresponding to the school year, I see girls and women really come out of themselves, take chances, try new things, and explore their ideas to the max.

Q: How do the girls find you and vice-versa?

Taylor: We ask English teachers at high-density public high schools and middle schools in central Los Angeles to help us identify girls who would most benefit from the program. We look for both low and high achievers, since both groups of girls need individualized attention, and we bring together girls from diverse cultures, neighborhoods, family units, and social backgrounds. Now that we are a bit more established, many girls find WriteGirl through word-of-mouth, our website, newspaper articles, or at book fairs and public readings throughout the city.

Q: Where do your mentors and volunteers come from?

Taylor: We recruit from all over Los Angeles, searching for professional women writers as well as women with strong communication skills who use writing in their careers. Our volunteers include screenwriters and television writers, novelists, poets, songwriters, editors, marketing and public relations executives, teachers, journalists, and attorneys, all of whom mentor our teen members or support the organization in other ways.

Q: What kind of application process is required of your mentors and volunteers?

Taylor: All volunteers are required to submit a written application that describes their work experience, writing background, and previous volunteering or mentoring experience, along with two writing samples. We conduct personal reference checks as well as criminal background checks, and WriteGirl has a mandatory comprehensive training for all volunteers (as well as ongoing training) to fully prepare them for their roles as mentors or support volunteers.



WriteGirl Q&A

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Q: How has the program evolved in the last four years?

Taylor: WriteGirl has grown tremendously in only five years. We now have over 60 high school girls and more than 120 women actively participating each season. Our alumni membership totals several hundred, and our list of supporters is even larger. But numbers only tell part of the story. The fact that we have a 100% success rate in getting girls to graduate from high school and then enroll in college speaks volumes about the impact of the program on our girls. While the program has changed very little since the beginning, we have added skilled board and staff members who have greatly enhanced the management of all aspects of WriteGirl's activities. We've also trained a number of our adult members to serve as team leaders (or "committee heads") to help manage important aspects of the program. And we're thrilled to see a repeating pattern in our alumni mentors and girls, where they go on to achieve personal and creative goals as well as continue to involve themselves in community service and mentorship.

Q: What do you find are the program's biggest challenges?

Taylor: Our two greatest challenges right now are securing long-term, multi-year financial support and expanding our board membership. WriteGirl produces more than 20 major events annually as well as a 200-page anthology for a membership of over 150. That requires a great deal of professional staffing and management oversight. We're working on expanding our program and event staff so that we can focus our board and key staff members on finding resources and financial support for WriteGirl's future. Once those efforts are on track, we can start working on our growth plan so we can expand to serve more girls in more locations.

Q: What is most rewarding to you about the program?

Taylor: It's amazing to see a girl enter WriteGirl as shy and withdrawn, or perhaps outgoing but a bit awkward, and see her in only a few months make an amazing transformation into a self-assured, well-spoken young woman. I have an email folder where I keep letters from mentees – unsolicited letters where they spontaneously share things they've learned or gained from WriteGirl. They're like an espresso shot for me – I check them out when I need a lift. The outpouring from parents is just as great. It's also very satisfying to see the women in the program grow more confident, expand their creative genres, make new friends, and even find writing and business partners to help them in their own careers. We're building a community for them as well, and that's rewarding too.



Q: What do you feel are the biggest needs of the organization?

Taylor: We really need 2 things right now: long-term financial support and expansion of our management staff. We have built a wonderful program and a posse of committed volunteers – now we need the means to sustain us and help us grow.

Q: What are your hopes for WriteGirl's future?

Taylor: We know that anywhere there are women writers, there are girls who need them. We look forward to expanding WriteGirl into other neighborhoods in Los Angeles, and eventually other cities. And as our alumni membership grows, we can't wait to hear (and share) all their stories of achievement and success.

