

## Holistic Support Subcommittee

### “The Spring Squad”

### Final Recommendations and Report

#### I. Challenge

Women are so much busier today than ever before. Many are torn between managing careers, families, and households. The women and girls we interviewed talked about the stressful struggle to find work/life balance and how this stress had the tendency to increase, especially during periods of transition. Even if these transitions were presumably positive life changes—like a new baby or a work promotion—we saw that a person’s excitement could often be diminished by such a change in their typical routine. The stress, if not managed well, can have several negative ramifications on one’s mental health, relationships, and various responsibilities. One member in our group talked about her sister and the pressure she felt to be perfect as she transitioned from high school to college. She coped with this life transition— which was overwhelming and exciting at once— by creating a personal sense of control that she discovered in an eating disorder. This problem was further exacerbated by social pressure online and among new peers where she felt she had to attain perfection. We had other interviewees talk about periods of transitions such as getting a divorce or retiring, where they felt alone and unsure of the direction their life was going. As a result, their transitions became even harder.

One of the ways to manage the stress in the healthiest manner is to be surrounded by friends, family, or other people who have gone through, or are currently going through, a similar hardship. When we spoke to the women and girls we interviewed, many could tell us a story of a stressful period of time and how having a supportive person or a kind of “personal cheerleader” helped them cope with a transition and achieve better results. Many women shared that support can come from things as simple as a lunch, text, or email. Overall, we found that the best remedy was having someone who could “cheerlead them along.”

#### II. Community Input

We interviewed a cross-section of women and girls. Our goal was to get representation from women who work a job, mothers who do not work outside the home, or women who have retired. We also targeted getting feedback from diverse communities and income ranges.

We found that the power in feeling supported was more universal than we originally thought. Most women described their ideal form of support as a personal “cheerleader” that can make them feel good about their progress and challenges them to be the best person they can be. Many women talked about their family, friends, co-workers, and teachers that provided this support and mentorship. A key aspect of the support was consistency; many women described wanting support that they would receive daily or weekly.

We asked the women we interviewed if there were periods of time when they needed support the most. We learned that transitions were the hardest periods of time where they would have appreciated some extra help. They talked about having kids/being new moms, divorce or marital issues, loss of a family member, schooling, and retirement as being critical transitions.

Technology was also a common theme that arose. A number of the women and girls we interviewed talked about the fallacy of Facebook, and how engaging in social media could actually worsen poor mental health they were experiencing. Many women found themselves comparing their lives to those of their supposedly perfect peers, even though it is widely known that social media only portrays the parts of our life we want people to see. There was significant discussion that occurred on the benefit of a personal interaction and building meaningful, emotional relationships between people.

We did a review of offerings in the community, and there are different ways the community assembles to provide support. There are church groups (i.e. Crossroads), grief counseling groups, Big Brother/Big Sister, etc. that are in place that can help provide support for women and girls as they go through certain transitions. Very few of these groups though laser-focused on women and girls, or provide support specified to both our situation, and our gender identity.

### III. Recommendations

#### Recommendation

6. Our community would benefit from a multi-age mentoring alliance, which includes peer-to-peer support, in order to build confidence in young girls during middle and high school.

As we started to research ways to assist women and girls, we found the concept of “MasterMinds” and thought it would be an interesting approach to exercise the idea of having a “cheerleader” to aid transitions. A MasterMind is a group of people who meet regularly to push themselves towards their goals, hold each other accountable, and

tackle challenges together. This concept was originally created by Napoleon Hill in his book, "Think and Grow Rich," and it has been used by successful people throughout history including Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, and Thomas Edison.

Our group pulled together 5 focus areas where we thought we could focus our efforts and make a meaningful impact.

- 1) Working / Professional Women
- 2) Mothers and Single Mothers
- 3) Immigrant Women and Girls
- 4) Retiring Women
- 5) High School Girls

Our recommendation for 2019 is to implement a MasterMind Group for High School Students, with a focus on juniors and seniors. We prioritized this group for several reasons:

- 1) **Impressionability:** A young person's mind is easily shapeable – if we can stress the importance of developing consistent self-care and quality communication skills while a person is young, they can carry on these behaviors for the rest of their life.
- 2) **Partners:** Out of all the groups, we found this had the most connections for partnerships (e.g. schools). We also found that most schools did not have an organization like this in place either.
- 3) **Longevity:** Setting up support systems in schools would allow for an organization outside of the Commission to run the day-to-day workings of groups and provide the organizational structure for implementation.

Here is the concept:

- 1) Test a mastermind for high school girls in 2019 (juniors/seniors) to talk about the issues they face without the fear of judgement / bullying;
- 2) Help them as they near major transitions (college, trade, military) and equip them with emotional and real life practical skills;
- 3) Encourage them to "raise the bar" and become better versions of themselves;
- 4) Enable them to develop empathy, help each other disconnect from social media and build deep, meaningful emotional connections with each other; and
- 5) Reinforce "lift as we climb" mentality.

Here are the potential partners:

- 1) Public and private high schools;
- 2) School boards; and
- 3) Non-profits (i.e. YWCA, Women Writing for a Change, etc.).

We envision help as providing location/moderators to lead group discussions, identifying key questions/issues that should be addressed, and recruiting 2-3 people to “champion” the topics and ensure success.

Respectfully Submitted,

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