

# SISTERMENTORS

Promoting Education Among Women and Girls of Color  
A Project of EduSeed

Fall/Winter 2009 Newsletter

A Newsletter for Donors and Friends of SisterMentors

## Our Second Group of Girls Start College

All six of SisterMentors' 12th grade girls, five of whom have been in SisterMentors since seventh grade, started college this fall. This is the second group of girls that SisterMentors has helped to send to college: **Nathalie Navarrete**, Bates College in Lewiston, Maine; **Ruhama Yared**, Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland; **Kedest Firdaweke**, Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia; **Alinah Mphofe**, Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria and Manassas, Virginia; **Rediet Abate**, University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia; and **Cindy Ayala**, Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria, Virginia.



Ruhama Yared, Goucher College and  
Kedest Firdaweke, Virginia Commonwealth University

Here's what Ruhama Yared said about the six years she spent in SisterMentors: "The college trips have helped me so much; I can't even find the words to express it. What I like so much about the visits is that we get to ask a lot of questions and they are all answered by people who know all about the subject. I learn so much from the question and answer sessions. I think that I am as ready as I can be for college and life on my own. It's all because SisterMentors has taught me how to be independent and what to look for when choosing a college. I think about the many other students who don't have the support of a program like SisterMentors to help them prepare for college. I consider myself very lucky that I became part of SisterMentors at a

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## 33 Women of Color Doctorates

In less than twelve years, SisterMentors has helped 33 women of color to complete their dissertations and get their doctorates. The following are the three women who earned their degrees this year:

**Tisha Y. Lewis** earned her Ph.D. in Reading from the University at Albany, State University of New York, in August 2009. As a native Washingtonian, Tisha attended the District of Columbia public schools, including School Without Walls. She is the recipient of the 2008 J. Michael Parker Award from the National Reading Conference and is a contributor to several upcoming publications, including Family Literacy: Complexities, Concerns and Considerations and Literacy Learning Through Artifacts: Every Object Tells A Story. She is the 2008-2010 recipient of a fellowship from Cultivating New Voices Among Scholars of Color of the National Council of Teachers of English Research Foundation.

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# From the Executive Director

Dear Donors and Friends:

I enjoy being a part of SisterMentors because there is always good news to share. It seems to be part of the very fabric of SisterMentors that something wonderful happens almost every day and I continue to be surprised and thrilled.

But first, I would like to thank all of you for your wonderful support. I know that we are living through uncertain times, especially with the economic situation we are in, but I prefer to see this as a time of great opportunity — we have the opportunity to be more creative in our thinking, to reach out more to others, and to show love to each other more often.

We helped send our second group of girls to college this fall and that was such an exciting moment for us. Five of the six girls had been in SisterMentors since they were eleven years old and in seventh grade. In June, I attended their high school graduation with family members and it was such a joyous occasion. I choked up when a mother wiped away tears from her eyes as her daughter was handed her diploma.

These girls follow in the footsteps of the first group of girls we sent to college in 2007, including to Duke University and Virginia Commonwealth University. They are now young women who are in their third year of college and have declared their majors, as you will see in this newsletter. Next fall, they will begin their senior year and will start looking at life after college. We are confident that they will consider continuing their education just like the women doctoral students who were their mentors while they were in SisterMentors.

We have one twelfth grader this school year. She is applying to college and just took the SAT Test. Our eleventh graders are aware that they must do well this school year if they want to get admitted next year to the college of their choice. Our ninth graders are quite competitive and their interim reports show that they are serious about creating a good academic track record so that their college applications will rise to the top. Our younger girls, ages 10 to 12, have a certain natural exuberance for learning and some of them share a love for Math and Science.

The women doctoral students that we help continue to work hard on completing their dissertations despite job layoffs and lack of anticipated funding. They continue to make tremendous sacrifices to achieve their educational goals and it is these stories of personal sacrifice and perseverance despite the odds that they share with our girls.

The women we have helped over the years to earn their doctorates are making significant contributions to society through nonprofits and universities and this



*Nathalie Navarrete, Bates College and  
Cindy Ayala, Northern Virginia Community College*

demonstrates the ripple effect of our work. Codou Diaw, who earned her doctorate in 2003, continues to promote gender equality in education for women and girls on the African continent. She is the Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists, a non-governmental organization in Nairobi, Kenya. Losang Rabgey, who earned her doctorate in 2006, is the Executive Director of Machik, a nonprofit organization that promotes equity and education on the Tibetan plateau. She helped found an award-winning first school in a Tibetan village that has an unprecedented requirement that half of the students must be girls. Losang is one of the first Tibetan women in the West to earn a doctorate. Calandra R. Tate, who earned her doctorate in 2007, has accepted a tenure track position in the Mathematics Department at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, and will start there this spring. She is one of the few African American women to hold a doctorate in Applied Mathematics. Laura Daughtery, who earned her doctorate in 2004 and is a professor at Catholic University, and Vivian H. Jackson, who earned her doctorate in 2007 and is a senior policy associate at the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, co-authored chapters in a soon to be released book on African Americans and Diabetes.

We are proud to announce that SisterMentors is featured in a just released book by Allison Silberberg titled Visionaries in Our Midst: Ordinary People Who Are Changing Our World. The book has already been #1 on Amazon's list of Hot New Releases in Philanthropy and Charity, and was sold out at a recent standing-room only book event at Politics & Prose bookstore in Washington, D.C.

I was humbled to receive an award for my work with SisterMentors from Ebony magazine in partnership with Pine-Sol. The award event was at the end of

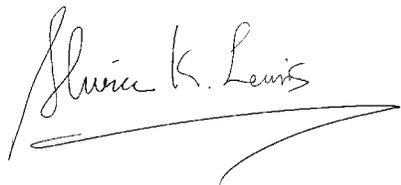
August at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington, D.C. It was a special occasion and I accepted the award, not just on my behalf, but on behalf of all of you who believe in the work we do here at SisterMentors and support us year after year.

I know that it is prudent to assess priorities during this challenging financial time. However, I kindly request that you keep SisterMentors on your list of priorities and donate to us as the year draws to a close. It is in hard times like these that we need your support more than ever. We are all in this together.

Please continue to support us. You can send us a check in the mail, make a donation online at [sistermentors.org](http://sistermentors.org) by clicking on the **DONATE NOW** link, or donate to us through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). We are listed under our umbrella nonprofit organization, EduSeed, and our CFC number is 90398.

As always, I encourage you to contact me at any time. I am always delighted to hear from you. I can be reached at [director@sistermentors.org](mailto:director@sistermentors.org) or at 202-778-6424. I look forward to talking with you.

Thank you for your support of SisterMentors!



Shireen K. Lewis, Ph.D.



Girls at Study Skills Workshop

## Our Second Group of Girls Start College

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Alinah Mphofe, Northern Virginia Community College

young age — when I was 11 years old and in seventh grade. Now, I am well-prepared to take on college and do my very best.” **Ruhama Yared, First Year Student at Goucher College, Fall 2009.**

During her six years in SisterMentors, Ruhama visited ten college campuses, was welcomed into the offices of two university presidents, visited two women’s colleges and met with the dean of one of them, dialogued with women of color undergraduates, went to class at a law school, posed questions to admissions and financial aid staff, participated in classroom discussions, ate in the dining halls and visited college dormitories. That is the kind of in-depth experience girls receive during their college visits with SisterMentors.

“Hi Dr. Lewis,

*I just thought I would say hello to you and let you know a little bit about what’s going on over here. Classes are great, not all but most. I am proud to let you know that I recently ran for the Vice President position for my Residence Hall Council and I won. I ran a hard campaign with the help of my friends and roommate, and I am sooo happy!!! I am off to a wonderful start! Let me know the meeting dates so that if I’m ever in the area I could drop by and say hello.*

*Thank you for EVERYTHING!!!!”*

*Kedest Firdaweke  
Began Virginia Commonwealth University in Fall 2009*

# Girls Visit American University, the University of Virginia and the University of Virginia School of Law



*Girls with President Casteen*

“They are serious about education,” said one of the girls after our visit to American University in April 2009. Twenty-three girls of color spent one day at American University (AU) and two days at the University of Virginia (UVA) during their spring break. The girls ranged in age from 10 to 17 and were in elementary, middle and high school. AU is recognized for having the most politically active students in the country and UVA has been ranked repeatedly as the top public university in the nation.

On both campuses, the girls had exciting learning experiences, including their meeting with President John Casteen of UVA. SisterMentors’ connections with both campuses made the girls’ visit very special. At AU, the girls were hosted by Fanta Aw, Vice President of Campus Life. The girls know Fanta well because she is one of the SisterMentors women who mentors them as she completes her dissertation for her doctorate in Sociology. SisterMentors also has deep connections to UVA. SisterMentors’ Founder, Dr. Shireen Lewis, is a graduate of the law school and was a Visiting Professor in the French department. Moreover, Dean Valerie Gregory, Assistant Dean of Admissions and Director of the Outreach program at UVA, is a strong supporter of SisterMentors and frequently advises Dr. Lewis on issues regarding college admission. Dean Gregory graciously hosted the girls, arranged their schedule, and spent time with them to discuss admissions and student life at UVA, including UVA’s honor system.

## **Visit to American University**

At AU, girls had a tour of the campus and ate lunch with AU women of color undergraduates in the dining hall. In addition to a session with Fanta Aw, girls had a class with Professor Caleen Jennings and met with Marquita Lightfoot, Associate Director of Admissions; Shirleyne McDonald, Associate Director of Financial Aid; and Shaconna Haley of the Academic Support Center.

“Creative, inspiring and imaginative!” This is how one of the girls described Professor Caleen Jennings of AU’s Department of Performing Arts, who is also on the faculty of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Professor Jennings is one of AU’s best teachers as well as a two-time Helen Hayes Award nominee for Outstanding New Play.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was an hour and a half class on Shakespeare with Professor Jennings. She began by telling the story of how she transitioned from acting to becoming a playwright. She then talked to the girls about how people present themselves to others intersects with the language that they use and how this intersection determines success. Professor Jennings then used props to act out a scene from Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part 3*. Next, she encouraged the girls to use words from Shakespeare to give insults and compliments and then asked them to use body language to convey the meaning of words. The girls were fully engaged in this class and participated with exuberance. At the end, Professor Jennings explained how she makes Shakespeare come alive, especially because some people of color may think that they cannot relate to Shakespeare. “Charismatic, down-to-earth and wise,” one of the girls said about Professor Jennings after the class.

## **Visit to the University of Virginia**

“I learned how IB and AP classes and grades factor into the decision to accept a student or not,” said one of the girls after our visit to UVA. Our two-day visit to UVA had many highlights, including our meeting with President John Casteen; a session with undergraduate students; a Science class facilitated by a professor of Chemistry, a professor of Engineering and several doctoral students; a session with Kathleen Weston of Studies in Women and Gender; and a class at the law school taught by Professor Darryl Brown. For our twelfth grade girls, this was their second visit to UVA since they had been part of SisterMentors when we visited the campus in 2005.

## **Meeting with President Casteen**

“An awesome man,” said one of the girls in describing UVA’s President Casteen, who graciously took time out of his very busy schedule to meet with the girls. President Casteen has been leading UVA for almost two decades and is the university’s seventh president. Girls sat in President Casteen’s office as he talked to them about Thomas Jefferson, who founded the university in 1819, and Jefferson’s vision for the university.

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## 33 Women of Color Doctorates

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Tisha's dissertation is titled *Family Literacy and Digital Literacies: A Redefined Approach to Examining Social Practices of an African-American Family*. Her ethnographic case study explores the multiple ways a mother and son interact with digital literacies in the home.

Her sense of determination and resiliency comes from her parents, Tom and Lucille Lewis. Her father, one of 16 children, was the first in his family to attend college after dropping out of school in tenth grade. While working as a District of Columbia police officer, he took eight years to complete his Bachelor of Science degree at American University. Today, Tisha's father is well known as the founder of a nonprofit organization, The Fishing School, which supports families in Washington, D.C.

Tisha is currently an adjunct professor at both American University and Trinity University. She is also a lecturer at Howard University. Her goal is to become a tenure track professor and to simultaneously serve the community by eradicating illiteracy and empowering families.

**LaNitra Walker** earned her Ph.D. in Art History with a Certificate in African and African American Studies in March 2009 from Duke University. LaNitra has published in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, the *Women's History Review*, the *Southern California Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Jewish Identities*. She is also a contributor to *The American Prospect* online magazine. She is a native of southern California.

LaNitra's dissertation is titled *Pictures that Satisfy: Modernist Discourses and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Nation in the Art of Irma Stern (1894-1966)*. Her dissertation examines how German-Jewish South African artist Irma Stern's work underscores the international influence of German Expressionism on modern art and how her work provides insight into the underlying political and social forces that aid in the construction of art historical narratives in South Africa. Because she is one of only a few internationally respected South African artists of the apartheid era, examining Stern's work and career allows us to develop a more complex understanding of how race, gender, and nation contributed to the development of modernism in South African art history.

LaNitra credits her parents for instilling in her, from a very young age, the value of education. Her parents bought her a little desk for studying even before she started kindergarten. She spent long hours reading at that desk every day. LaNitra's parents were her biggest cheerleaders at every stage of her education. Her close relationship with faculty at Stanford University in California inspired her to apply to graduate school.

Now that she has her doctorate, LaNitra plans to begin revising her dissertation for publication and begin teaching. She is also committed to helping shape higher education policy to ensure that all students have the opportunity to obtain a college degree.



LaNitra Walker, Ph.D., Duke University

**Lynda C. Jackson** earned her Doctorate in Management in August 2009 from the University of Maryland University College. Lynda is a retired Colonel who proudly served more than 28 years in the United States Air Force. She has received many awards for her work in the Air Force, including "Best in the Air Force" and the Defense Superior Service Award.

Lynda's dissertation is titled *Workforce Diversity in the Senior Executive Service: Exploring African American Women's Perceptions of Success Factors Necessary to Gain Appointments in the Federal Senior Executive Service*. Her research findings suggest that although African American women may be aware of the importance of key success factors needed to achieve Senior Executive Service (SES) — such as mentors, informal networks, role models, organization diversity practices and emotional intelligence — they continue to attribute personal career success to internal factors such as education, hard work and their own ability. Lynda's findings also suggest that African American women may increase their potential for SES appointments in the federal government through gaining access to powerful external success factors such as mentors, networks and role models.

Now that she has her doctorate, Lynda plans to become involved at the undergraduate level where she hopes to inspire and mentor students to reach their academic goals, especially those who doubt their capabilities. Her aim is to encourage students in the mode of President Barack Obama's "Yes We Can" mantra and to consistently build confidence and make students aware of their own potential for the highest levels of academic success.

Lynda's father was in the Air Force so she travelled a lot growing up. She was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming and spent her formative years in Ewa Beach, Hawaii. Lynda is 55 years old and proud that she has fulfilled her lifelong dream of earning a doctorate. She believes that one is never too old to fulfill one's dreams.

## Social Skills and Etiquette Workshop



“Wonderful, very detailed, the best one yet,” said one of the girls after the Social Skills and Etiquette Workshop on Saturday, June 20, 2009. Twenty-six girls attended the workshop taught by Ms. Fannie Allen of the prestigious Allen Etiquette Institute and graciously hosted by the Westin National Harbor Hotel in Maryland. The National Harbor is an expansive waterfront on the banks of the Potomac River with tree-lined promenades and places for shopping, dining and entertainment.

This year, the workshop was both a tutorial and a celebration of the six girls starting college this fall. They were presented with gifts to use in college, including blankets, sheets and towels, from SisterMentors women and one of our donors, Dr. Carroll Hardy.

To everyone’s delight, Roxie Jairrels and Shannon Scott, two of our girls who are in their third year of college, returned to celebrate and share their college experiences. They advised girls living on campus to set rules with their roommates, to search out healthy meals in the dining halls to avoid putting on weight in their first year — the “Freshman 15” as it is commonly called — and to limit their time on social networks such as Facebook.

The highlight of the Social Skills part of the workshop was instruction on public speaking to enhance girls’ communication skills. Girls were taught public speaking skills including how to stand at a podium and introduce a speaker. The girls learned that most people are scared to speak in front of an audience and that the way they can help combat that fear is through practicing their talk. Girls were also told that when speaking at a lectern, they should stand tall with a straight back, have their hands either on the lectern or relaxed at their side, make good eye contact with people in the audience and speak clearly and loudly for everyone to hear.

Girls were guided in preparing a short introduction of the girl sitting next to them. After preparation, some of

the girls went to the podium and presented their introduction. Ms. Allen demonstrated good posture at the lectern and a model introduction.

During the Etiquette part of the workshop, girls were instructed in the etiquette of dining when a four-course meal is served and were shown the differences between the American and Continental styles. They were reminded that proper etiquette requires that they not place their elbows on, nor reach across, the table. Girls were told that during interview lunches, the interaction with the interviewer is primary while the meal is secondary. In addition, girls should finish up their meal as soon as the interviewer finishes and should not ask for a doggy bag to take food home.

This year, in keeping with the celebratory mood, girls were encouraged to linger over each course and not rush through the meal. As always, the girls raved about the workshop on their evaluations. “I liked everything about the workshop because it was all outstanding,” one of the girls said.

*“During the six years I was in SisterMentors, I have had many positive experiences. But there is one that stands out the most in my mind. I have always been a very shy and quiet person. I didn’t like to be noticed much. So when Dr. Lewis asked me to co-lead SisterMentors’ 10th Anniversary Celebration and Fundraiser in 2007, I was anxious. I would normally get nervous speaking in front of a live audience and fumble my words. All of the older girls had done their best to prepare for the celebration, so now it was my turn. I walked in front of everyone with butterflies in my tummy. I wanted to make a good impression. I was excited. I was leading an event! As I began the introduction, I stuttered here and there, but quickly improved and spoke with confidence. I began to realize that it was nice to have the spotlight shine on me for a change. Afterwards, some of the donors told me I did a great job. I was amazed. I changed for the better and if it were not for SisterMentors, I wouldn’t have the confidence I have today for public speaking.”*

*Cindy Ayala  
Began Northern Virginia Community College in Fall 2009*

# Girls Visit American University, the University of Virginia and the University of Virginia School of Law

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*Girls Using Liquid Nitrogen to Make Ice Cream*

He explained that there are students from all over the world at UVA and shared that he had recently returned from a trip to China where he met with parents of current UVA students. One of the girls asked if the university has a particular specialty and the president said that most students choose arts and sciences. He then told the girls about his daughter who graduated from UVA in five years with a bachelor's degree and a degree in teaching. Another girl inquired whether there are any equestrian events at the university and the president responded that there is a polo club.

One of the girls asked why students choose UVA. The president said that a first-year student would meet an interesting mix of people and would have fun doing so. President Casteen informed the girls that his first teaching job was at a historically black university.

At the end of the meeting, the President presented the girls with cookies and they presented him with a Washington, D.C. souvenir as a "thank you" gift.

## **Attending Classes**

On the second day of their visit, girls attended classes, including International Relations, Drama and Theatre, Science and Sociology. In the Sociology class, girls learned about French Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, and his impact on the discipline. The Science class was designed specifically for the younger girls and led by professors and graduate students. Much to their excitement, the girls put on goggles and heavy gloves as they were taught how to make ice cream using liquid nitrogen.

In addition to attending classes, girls had a special session on women's issues with Kathleen Weston, Director of Studies in Women and Gender and a Professor in the Department of Anthropology. Professor Weston spoke with girls about the different ways women's lives can be researched and studied.

## **Girls Go to Class at the Law School**

"I really liked being taught a class at the law school. The teaching style was wonderful and the classroom setting was inviting," said one of the girls after the class with Professor Darryl Brown of UVA Law School. Our visit to the law school was very special, especially because many of our younger girls want to become lawyers. Also for Dr. Lewis, the visit marked both a return home since she is a graduate of UVA Law School and an occasion to reconnect with Professor Brown, an old friend from their days as students at the law school.

Professor Brown designed and taught a criminal law class to the girls. Like law students, the girls sat in a classroom to read a case and examine a statute. The girls were thrilled as they responded to questions correctly. Professor Brown presented a criminal case that he uses with his first-year law students, *Martin v. State*. He asked girls to identify the plaintiff and defendant, the type of case it was, and where the case was in the court system. The girls analyzed the statute under which the defendant was convicted. Professor Brown then asked the girls if they could guess what the appeals court would decide based on the correct interpretation of the statute. The younger girls were especially engaged and responsive and raised their hands constantly to answer questions.

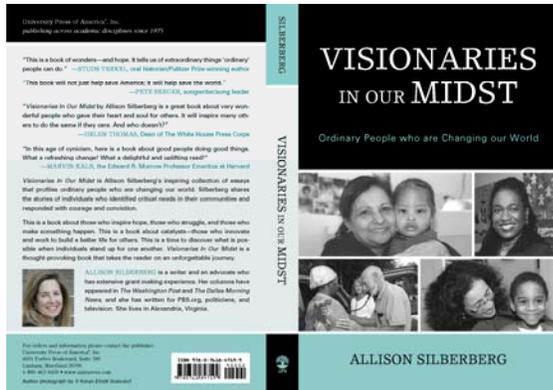
The girls had questions about the requirements for becoming a lawyer and about the bar exam. One girl asked what it takes to become a law professor and another asked if speech classes are required in law school. One of the girls, who wants to become a judge, was surprised to learn that she had to first go to law school. Another girl asked Professor Brown to talk about the most difficult case he has ever had. He responded that he had a client who had been wrongfully convicted and he won his release. After the class, one of the girls described Professor Brown as "smart, intelligent and nice."

*"Dear Dr. Lewis:*

*Thank you for arranging for me to meet with the promising young students you brought to the University. The care and encouragement they are receiving from SisterMentors will prepare these students well for the careers and communities they will enter later in life. Please tell them that I enjoyed meeting them and that I wish for all of them a very bright future."*

*John T. Casteen III  
President  
University of Virginia*

## New Book Featuring SisterMentors Released



We are proud to announce that SisterMentors is featured in a just released book by Allison Silberberg titled [Visionaries in Our Midst: Ordinary People Who Are Changing Our World](#). The book has already been #1 on Amazon's list of Hot New Releases in Philanthropy and Charity, was sold out at a recent book event in Washington, D.C. and is getting great reviews!

Here's what they are saying about the book: "This is a book about those who inspire hope, those who struggle, and those who make something happen. This is a time to discover what is possible when individuals stand up for one another. *Visionaries In Our Midst* is a thought-provoking book that takes the reader on an unforgettable journey."

[Visionaries in Our Midst](#) is available from SisterMentors and from bookstores nationwide. If you would like to purchase a copy from SisterMentors, please contact us at 202-778-6424 or [director@sistermentors.org](mailto:director@sistermentors.org).

The purchase price is \$19.95 plus \$4.95 for shipping and handling. We can ship anywhere in the U.S. If you live in the Washington, D.C. area and would like to pick up your copy, you can get a copy at our office during regular business hours — please call ahead.

Buy your copy today!

## Dr. Shireen Lewis Receives Award from Ebony Magazine



Dr. Shireen Lewis received an award from Ebony magazine on Saturday, August 29, 2009, at Ebony's Sisterspeak Luncheon at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C. Ebony honored Dr. Lewis as an "Unsung Hero" who is making a difference for children, schools and communities.

"The impetus for my work," says Dr. Lewis, "is my experience as a child attending the first school in my village in Trinidad and Tobago. It was there that I was mentored by a young woman teacher when I was eight years old. That mentoring relationship profoundly changed my life and boosted my self-esteem to such an extent that I went on to excel in college, earn a law degree, and a Ph.D."

Ebony, a news magazine published since 1945 by Chicago-based Johnson Publishing Company, chronicles the achievements of blacks in America. The luncheon was co-sponsored by Pine-Sol Cleaners and attended by approximately 300 women. Featured speakers were Diane Amos, actress and stand-up comedian, better known as The Pine-Sol Lady; and The Rev. Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, author of [Too Blessed to Be Stressed](#). The mood was celebratory and the speakers ignited the audience with inspiring and uplifting messages.

## Our First Group of Girls in College Begin their Third Year

In 2007, we helped send our first group of girls to college and they are now entering their third year. Here's an update on some of them:

**Megan Tuck** at Duke University is majoring in Sociology and obtaining a Certificate in Markets and Management. She plans to go into advertising or public relations after earning her undergraduate degree. Megan also plans to pursue a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) at her dream school, Columbia University.

**Shannon Scott** at Virginia Commonwealth University is majoring in Business Management/Administration. Shannon is considering going to law school after

earning her degree and plans to get as much education as she can so that she has lots of options.

**Sara Estefanos** transferred from Tidewater Community College to Old Dominion University last spring. She is majoring in International Studies and Political Science.

**Roxie Jairels** transferred from Savannah College of Art and Design to Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) where she is continuing her studies and plans to earn an Associate's degree in Photography, and Sign Language and Interpretation. Roxie is also actively looking into returning to a four-year university after NOVA.

## Thank You Very Much!

Special thanks to the law firm of Schiff Hardin LLP including the Diversity Committee, for everything it does for SisterMentors. Special thanks to Schiff Hardin Partner, Regina Speed-Bost.

Thanks to all of our wonderful donors and supporters, including Sherry Quirk, Norma Scogin, and Keelin Quirk, Linda Orr, Tracy Gary, Richard A. Weibl and Terri Louise Nally, Laree Martin, Barbara Burton, Donya Douglas, David and Gabriel Fitzgerald, Dawn Nelson, Kris Miller, Florrie Walker, Nigel and Denise Myers, Meredith Jolivert, The Honorable Mary Cheh, Elizabeth Cheng, Governor James J. Blanchard, Diana and John Zentay, Glynn Key, John Valery White, Howard Bauleke, Michael Tajchman, Ayodeji Akala, Robbie and Dan Tish, Eileen Menton, Laura Pruitt, Chris Eckl, Chris Turner, Marcia V. Ellis, Kathy D. Smith, Milton Brown, John Chilton, Elizabeth Nash, Carla Chissell, Verda Deutscher, Andrea Jones, Adele Kimmel, Mary McKinley, Shari Miles, Judi Moore Latta, Paula Quick Hall, Bob Danziger, Muriel Reed, Townsend Robinson, Sara Green, Faith Wheeler, Katina Stapleton, Michelle Vanni, Philip and Joan Stewart, Deborah Gould, James and Virginia Newmyer, Tom and Lucille Lewis, LaNitra Walker and Matthew Berger, Vivian H. Jackson, Lynda Jackson, Tisha Lewis, Betsy Stewart, Jon Miller and Christian Yoder, Dr. Carroll Hardy, Ingrid and Andrew Crane, David Whettstone, Ramsey Selden, Paula Stern, Paula and Moses Boyd, Cathy and Donald Fogel, Adrienne Clair, Eileen King, Susan Kynor, J McCray, Ghada Attieh, Nellie Gargarita, Reverend Sylvia Sumter of Unity of Washington D.C., the Jerry Taylor and Nancy Bryant Foundation, the Crowell & Moring Foundation, the Women's Bar Association Foundation of the District of Columbia, the Stentzel Foundation, Alternative Gifts of Greater Washington, Ebony Magazine, the Clorox Company, Davis, Sita & Company P. A., Whole Foods Market P Street, Java Green and everyone who donates to us through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers: Renae Baird, Dawn Nelson, Mary Helen Coleman, Cherry Powell, LaShoun Christian, Shannon Cobb, John Teschner, Wayne Richardson, Margery Sullivan, LaNitra Walker, Dr. Koritha Mitchell, Nancy Jairrels and Sara Green.

Special thanks to Alan Fedman, Laura Pruitt and Margery Sullivan for helping prepare our twelfth graders for college admission and thanks to Fanta Aw, Tisha Lewis, Lynda Jackson and Dr. Carroll Hardy for their gifts to our girls starting college.

Thanks to everyone at American University for making the girls' visit such a wonderful success, including Dora Oduor, Professor Caleen Jennings, Marquita Lightfoot, Shirleyne McDonald, and Shaconna Haley. Special thanks to Fanta Aw for making it happen. And at the University of Virginia, thanks to President Casteen, Peggy Pasternak, Professor Darryl Brown, Dean Valerie Gregory, the Chemistry and Engineering Departments, Laura Mellusi and Kathleen Weston. Special thanks to

Glynn Key for making it happen. And thanks to donors Pat and Jane Belisle for their hospitality during our visit.

Special thanks to Binta Bayoh and Sherifa Idris, two eleventh graders in SisterMentors, for volunteering with us during the summer. Very special thanks to Robert Nash who graciously volunteers his time to tutor our girls in Math and Robyn Nichols of Sidwell Friends School, who volunteered her time to teach our girls a workshop on good study habits, organizational skills and time management — and thanks to Norma Scogin for making the workshop happen.

Special thanks to Kimberley Hurley of the Alexandria Office on Women and Libby Delgado for their ongoing help at our annual college visits. Thanks to the Alexandria Office on Women for its ongoing partnership.

And as always, very special thanks to the women and girls in SisterMentors who help fundraise and for their fortitude and grace.



*Rediet Abate, University of Mary Washington*

*"We have seen our daughter's self-confidence grow since she joined SisterMentors. SisterMentors has really helped our daughter to improve her performance in school and her social etiquette. Dr. Lewis and the mentors really help the girls. Our daughter has told us that she loves the sessions because she has a mentor to guide her to go to college. We also think it is nice that the group goes on a college visit during spring break. It helps our daughter to be better prepared for what's to come."*

*Jackie Sam and Mohammed Idris  
Parents of SisterMentors Girl*

## From the Mother of Two of Our Girls



*Frahiwot and Kedest with Mom at Graduation*

SisterMentors has made a huge difference in the lives of my daughters, Kedest and Frahiwot. Kedest just started Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and is off to a wonderful start because of the mentoring and support she received from SisterMentors during the six years she was in the program. Kedest joined the program in seventh grade and went on all the college visits in middle and high school. So when it came time for her to apply to college, Kedest needed very little help from her older sisters. She already knew about the college application process and what colleges were looking for.

Kedest has always been interested in having a career in business. She was in the Academy of Finance program for three years during high school and was exposed to a curriculum that included economics, accounting, banking and credit, and financial planning. She therefore loved SisterMentors' annual social skills and etiquette workshop with Ms. Fannie Allen because it taught her to dress professionally, to carry herself

with confidence, to be gracious in professional settings and the etiquette of dining at fine restaurants. She did not learn these things anywhere else but at SisterMentors.

Kedest started taking my youngest daughter, Frahiwot, to the mentoring sessions when Frahiwot was ten years old and in fourth grade. Since then, Frahiwot's passion for Math and Science has increased tremendously. My daughter loves Math and Science and at eleven years old, she already knows that she wants to pursue a career either as a cardiologist, a paleontologist or an engineer.

Frahiwot now has a Math tutor who is a volunteer with SisterMentors and recently he advised me to request that Frahiwot be placed in an advanced Math class at school. I am very happy with my daughter's progress and have made the request.

This past summer, SisterMentors told us about a Science camp for Frahiwot, helped us with the application, and Dr. Lewis wrote a strong letter of recommendation. The application process was very competitive and, although my daughter did not get admitted, she was high on the waiting list. SisterMentors has already identified another Science camp for my daughter to apply to next summer. In addition, a day trip SisterMentors arranged for Frahiwot to visit an African American woman engineer at NASA last summer boosted her self-confidence and reinforced the message she gets from SisterMentors that she can achieve anything as long as she puts her mind to it.

As a single mother with four girls, I know that my youngest daughters, Kedest and Frahiwot, are in good hands at SisterMentors. In my eyes, SisterMentors is an exceptional program because it is teaching my daughters how to fly in ways that I could not imagine.

—Zuriashwork Esubalew

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## SisterMentors' Recent Accomplishments

- Helped two groups of girls of color from low income families to get into college, including to Duke University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Goucher College, Bates College and Northern Virginia Community College.
- Helped 3 more women of color to earn doctorates, bringing the total number of women we have helped to 33.
- Our girls in college began their third year and declared their majors.
- Took girls to visit American University and the University of Virginia, bringing the total number of colleges SisterMentors girls have visited to 10.
- SisterMentors is featured in a new book, [Visionaries in Our Midst: Ordinary People Who Are Changing Our World](#) by Allison Silberberg.
- SisterMentors Founder, Dr. Shireen Lewis, received award from Ebony magazine for her work with SisterMentors.

# PLEASE SUPPORT SISTERMENTORS

I would like to make a donation to SisterMentors. My donation will help SisterMentors to continue mentoring women and girls of color.

Choose this:

## DONATION BY CHECK

Please send your donation by December 10, 2009

- Here is my donation of \$250 or more
- I cannot give \$250 or more at this time but here is my donation of (please choose one):
- \$200
  - \$175
  - \$150
  - \$100
  - \$50
  - Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



- Yes, my employer/company has a matching gift program and I have asked them to match my donation to SisterMentors.

Or choose this:

## ONLINE DONATION

Please make your donation today

- I am making a donation online at [www.sistermentors.org](http://www.sistermentors.org) by clicking on the **DONATE NOW** link and following the instructions.

Or choose this:

## DONATION THROUGH CFC

- My employer is a federal agency or otherwise participates in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) of the National Capital Area. I am making my donation through CFC by filling out my employer's pledge form and writing in EduSeed's CFC number which is 90398.

For donations by check, please use the enclosed envelope and make your check payable to EduSeed/SisterMentors and mail to:

**EduSeed/SisterMentors  
1666 K Street N.W., Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20006**

*Please remember your donation is tax deductible.*

## Who We Are

SisterMentors is a project of EduSeed, a nonprofit organization located in Washington, D.C. EduSeed's mission is to promote education among traditionally disadvantaged and underserved communities such as women and people of color. SisterMentors helps women of color to complete their dissertation and get the doctorate. The women in turn, while in our program, give back to their community by mentoring girls of color in elementary, middle and high schools, primarily from low income families, inspiring girls to go to college. The women and girls are African Americans, Latinas, Asian Americans, and immigrants.

Our goal is to help stop the high drop-out rate among girls of color and increase the number of women of color doctorates.

We believe that doctoral candidates and Ph.D.s of color are excellent role models — and a powerful yet untapped source of knowledge, motivation and inspiration — for children of color at risk of dropping out of school.

We exist because statistics show that more than 50 percent of doctoral candidates drop out of their programs. In 2006, out of 50.8 percent of all women doctorates, only 11.4 percent went to women of color (African American, Latina, Asian American and Native American combined). We also exist because girls of color are dropping out of school at an early age. Our message to girls is to stay in school, do well and go to college.

We have helped 33 women of color to complete their dissertations and get their doctorates since September 1997. We helped send two groups of girls to college, including to Duke University, Goucher College, Bates College and Northern Virginia Community College.

## EduSeed's Board of Directors

Welcome to new board members Margery Sullivan, LaNitra Walker and Michele A. Roberts.

EduSeed's current board members are the following:

- Timothy Boller
- Claudia Cantarella
- Montina M. Cole
- Shireen K. Lewis
- Michele A. Roberts
- Selena Mendy Singleton
- Margery Sullivan
- LaNitra Walker

## DONATE to Us Through CFC

Our umbrella nonprofit organization, EduSeed, was selected to participate in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) this year.

If you have friends who are federal employees in the Washington, D.C. area, please ask them to donate to us through CFC. We are listed in the CFC catalog under **EduSeed**, and our designation number is **90398**. Thanks for your support of our work!!!

### EDUSEED/SISTERMENTORS

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Promoting Education Among Women and Girls of Color

*Fall/Winter 2009 Newsletter*