

SISTERMENTORS

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

10th Anniversary Issue

Fall/Winter 2007 Newsletter

A Newsletter for Donors and Friends of SisterMentors

Our Girls Start College this Fall

Five SisterMentors girls started college this fall. They are the first girls in the program to go to college. This is an exciting time for all of us here at SisterMentors. Our girls received offers from Duke, Hampton, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Howard University, Savannah College of Art and Design, Radford and Virginia Commonwealth Universities, and Tidewater Community College, among others. These new undergraduates have been in SisterMentors since eighth grade and have set a high standard for the younger girls to follow.



Megan Tuck, Duke University

Megan Tuck started her undergraduate studies at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Duke is ranked as one of the top academic and research institutions in the U.S. Megan is the first in her

immediate family to go to college and the second in her extended family to do so. Based on her outstanding academic achievement, Megan received a scholarship and grants from Duke to cover almost all of her expenses. She also was accepted to Hampton with a full scholarship and to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. At Duke, Megan is on the academic affairs committee of the Black Student Alliance and volunteers with Project Child where she tutors children in kindergarten.

Roxie Jairrels is off to Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in Savannah, Georgia to pursue a bachelor of fine arts in photography. SCAD boasts of its small classes and its faculty with distinguished backgrounds in

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27 Women of Color Doctorates

As we celebrate SisterMentors' tenth anniversary, two more SisterMentors women received their doctorates, bringing the number of women we have helped to 27.

Vivian Jackson defended her dissertation and received her doctorate on September 28, 2007. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Welfare from the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where she was a Mandel Leadership Fellow. Vivian's dissertation is titled "The Meaning of Culture in Family Preservation and Kinship Care Services: An Afrocentric Translation."

Vivian is currently a Senior Policy Associate at the National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human

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From the Executive Director

Dear Donors and Friends:

What an exciting time for us here at SisterMentors. This is it ---The BIG 10. I cannot begin to tell you how joyous we are on the occasion of our tenth anniversary. When I started SisterMentors ten years ago, I did not imagine that it would still be in existence ten years later. I am so excited that I don't even know where to begin. I want to thank all of you for your continuing generous support. Each year, we raise most of our funds from you, our individual donors. You are the reason that we can now celebrate the success of the women and girls who are in our program.

Our first group of girls started college this fall. Almost all of these girls have been in SisterMentors since eighth grade. We are extremely proud of them and very excited for their families. In addition to our girls going off to college, we also helped two more women to get their doctorates, bringing the number of women we have helped to 27.

The biggest endorsement of our program this year was from some of our girls who brought their younger sisters to join SisterMentors. Five girls, who have been in SisterMentors since seventh and eighth grade, brought their younger sisters to join our program. Cindy brought her nine year-old sister, Diana, who is in fourth grade, to our social skills and etiquette workshop and our mentoring sessions. This endorsement from our girls is indeed the highest honor that our program can receive.

Our program opens girls' eyes to a whole new world beyond their neighborhoods. This is certainly what happened when our girls visited New York City during their spring break. Their reaction was so palpable that my view of the city was changed as I began to see it through their eyes. Thanks to some of our donors, the girls were treated to tickets to The Color Purple on Broadway. The Broadway musical brought to life Alice Walker's novel, which the girls had been reading during their mentoring sessions with SisterMentors women. We surprised the girls with tickets for the show a few hours before we got on the subway to go to Broadway --- one of them literally began jumping up and down on hearing the news. For almost all of the girls, it was their first time seeing a Broadway show, and they loved it.

Ten years after founding SisterMentors, the women in our program continue to astound and move me. Carol Hedgspeth and Vivian Jackson, both of whom received their Ph.D.s this year, are such wonderful examples of determination and perseverance. When Carol came to SisterMentors, she had already spent almost twelve years pursuing her doctorate. She faced many challenges, including from her university, but she did not give up. Carol successfully defended



First Women in SisterMentors, Late 1990's

her dissertation in April after having her third daughter in January. Vivian is fifty-something and has been in SisterMentors for about five years. While working on her dissertation she had to take time off to help one of her sons prepare for college, at the same time following the progress of her other son who was in high school. Vivian was also challenged by a demanding job that required a lot of out-of-town travel. Nevertheless, Vivian and Carol persevered and realized their dream of getting their Ph.D.

As you turn the pages of this newsletter, you will see that our graduates have been doing exceptional things since getting their doctorates. Not surprisingly, many of them are in careers that help women and girls to succeed. In large part, they are continuing to use their education to serve others, just like they did while they were in SisterMentors. We are so very proud of them!

The girls in our program are learning how to better position themselves for acceptance to good colleges because they are listening closely to college admissions officers during our college visits, as well as to our girls who have just gone off to college. Our ninth graders are taking Honors classes and our eleventh graders are taking Advanced Placement classes. SisterMentors women are also continuing to make great strides and we expect one more woman to get her doctorate before the end of 2007.

I am just as excited and passionate about the work we are doing as when I founded SisterMentors ten years ago. Over the years people have asked me why I continue to do the work I do. I always reach deep down inside of me for memories of my educational experiences as a child, almost all of which were positive and affirming. I attended the first school in my village in Trinidad and Tobago, my family had little money, and resources in our village were scarce. Yet, starting in elementary school, I had teachers who cared and pushed me to excel academically. And that gave me a strong sense of who I am and of my abilities. At every stage of my education --- from elementary to graduate school --- I had a teacher or a mentor who encouraged

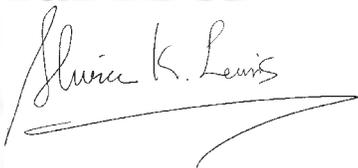
me to pursue my dreams. And that is what we are trying to give back to the women and girls in SisterMentors: a strong sense of themselves, hope in their dreams, the ambition to pursue their education so that they can make a better life for themselves and their families, and the courage to make a difference in this world.

I am humbled by your generosity and grateful for your support during these past years. I feel strongly that we are all part of a community working together to make a better life for those who are less privileged. I know for sure that we are all connected to each other in this life no matter where on the planet we may live. Thank you for your commitment to the women and girls in our program. Please continue to support us. We would love to continue to have you by our side for the next ten years.

We continue our campaign to raise much needed funds in honor of SisterMentors' tenth anniversary. So far, we have raised over \$75,000. We have about \$45,000 more to raise to meet our campaign goal of \$120,000 by December 2007. We would like to invite you to make a one-time donation of \$500 or more in honor of SisterMentors' tenth anniversary. Or you can make a pledge of \$100 a month for the next twelve months. Of course, we are thankful for whatever amount you can give.

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 or 202-778-6424. I look forward to speaking with you.

Thank you for your support of SisterMentors! Let's celebrate the beginning of ten more successful years!



Shireen K. Lewis, Ph.D.



First Girls Mentoring Session, 2001

Our Girls Start College this Fall

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their fields. Roxie chose SCAD over the Art Institute of Pittsburgh where she was also accepted. She received two merit scholarships based on portfolios she submitted with her application. Roxie, who has won awards for her photography and sold some of her work, plans to become a commercial photographer.

Shannon Scott is enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, a preeminent research university known for several of its degree programs, including art, social work and medicine. She was also admitted to Fordam, Radford and Howard Universities, among others. Shannon, who received an award last year from the Tavis Smiley Foundation for community service, plans to continue her strong commitment to volunteerism.

Sara Estefanos and **Arsema Ghirmai** both started Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Norfolk, Virginia. TCC is one of the fastest growing two-year colleges in the U.S. and touts the achievement of its graduates. Sara and Arsema plan to go to university in two years after they receive their Associate degree. Sara plans to major in history or psychology and is interested in writing for her college newspaper and playing extramural soccer.

We are very pleased with our girls' achievements and intend to stay in touch with them during their college years. In May, Megan and Roxie came to talk to the younger girls about their experiences preparing for and applying to college. The girls had lots of questions and said that although they felt "overwhelmed" they were also encouraged and inspired.

Dear Dr. Lewis:

How are you? I just thought I'd give you a little update on my college experience so far. Well, I love my roommates. They are great. I'm still undecided about a major but I am leaning towards psychology now. I volunteer at a local elementary school and I work at the gym located here on campus. I am homesick! But I am liking Durham more and more as time goes on.

Give me a call,

Megan

From Megan Tuck at Duke University

Our Graduates and Where They Are Today...

SisterMentors has helped 27 women of color to get their doctorates since its founding in September 1997. Most of our graduates are pursuing careers or do other work that advances the interests of women and girls. Here are profiles on some of our graduates and an update on where they are today.

Paula Quick-Hall, Ph.D., 1998

Paula Quick-Hall was a divorced mother when she earned her Ph.D. in 1998, more than ten years after she enrolled in her program. Today, she is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at North Carolina Central University, a historically Black university in Durham, North Carolina. She had previously taught as an adjunct professor at two historically Black universities.

After receiving her Ph.D., Paula received an offer from Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, one of only two Black women's colleges in the U.S. Bennett was creating a new Political Science Department and Paula was asked to chair the department. Paula eagerly accepted the offer because Bennett had a special place in her heart since both of her grandmothers, her mother, three aunts and several cousins are Bennett alumnae.

In 1999, while at Bennett, Paula founded a nonprofit organization—the African American Education and Research Organization. This was the beginning of a new phase of her continuing effort to do work that empowers African American parents, children, and young adults to make well-informed choices about schooling, informal education, and learning at home.

Paula then left Bennett and began working for Research and Evaluation Associates --- a small company in Chapel Hill, North Carolina --- doing evaluation research and consulting for government agencies.

Judi Moore Latta, Ph.D., 1999

Judi Moore Latta has always been a woman on the move. She is one of about four women who came together to create the first group of SisterMentors women in 1997. Today, she is a full professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C. in the Radio, TV and Film Department and she is also on the graduate faculty of the Department of Mass Communications and Media Studies.

For two years, Judi served as interim general manager of WHUT --- the public television station licensed to Howard.



Genevieve Yirenkyi, Ph.D., 2004

WHUT was the first African American owned and operated public television station in the U.S.

These days Judi's plate is kept full as she co-chairs the Women's Studies graduate certificate program at Howard and is on loan from her department to WHUR-WORLD (96.3 HD-2), a digital radio channel that is accessible on the Internet.

With all that she does, Judi still has time for writing book chapters and has published on such topics as "spirituals as lived experience" and call stories of African American women ordained ministers.

Judi volunteers her time to work with young women ages 13 to 17 in a girls' rites of passage program. The program consists of workshops and field trips and deals with issues of self-image and awareness of body, mind and spirit. She also chairs the Deaconess Board at her church.

Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D., 2000

Avis Jones-DeWeever received her Ph.D. in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, College Park. Today, she is Director of the National Council of Negro Women's new research institute called the Research, Public Policy and Information Center. The center gathers and disseminates information that empowers African American women and stimulates advocacy to improve the quality of life for women, their families and their communities.

After earning her Ph.D., Avis was an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Richmond in Virginia. More recently she was director of the Poverty, Education and Social Justice Programs at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) in Washington, D.C. At IWPR, Avis' work examined the causes and consequences of poverty on the well-being of low-income women and their families, and strategies for reducing poverty.

Avis has authored and co-authored numerous publications. Her policy perspectives have been distributed through the media, including the New York Times, CNN, National Public Radio and BBC Radio International. Avis is the mother of two boys.

Adrienne Smith, Ph.D., 2001

Adrienne Smith received her doctorate in Public Health with an emphasis on Women's Health from the University of Maryland, College Park. Today, she is a Public Health Advisor in the division of policy and program development in the Office on Women's Health at the U.S. Department of Human Health and Services in Washington, D.C. Adrienne facilitates the minority women's health and women's mental health initiatives and the minority women's health panel of experts. Her office seeks to redress inequities in research, education and health care services that have historically placed women's health at risk.

Adrienne has a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology Pre-Med from Norfolk State University and a Master of Science in Nutritional Science from Hampton University. As a nutritionist, she has promoted breast feeding and prenatal nutrition among minority and underserved women.

Kangbai Konaté, Ph.D., 2002

Born and raised in France to parents from Mali and Guinea, West Africa, Kangbai Konaté received her doctorate with highest honors in Sociology in 2002 from Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Today, she is a consultant for a U.S. nonprofit where she works to improve the lives of women in Equatorial Guinea, West Africa.

Kangbai has been working in the area of education for thirteen years, first as an educational supervisor and advisor in Paris and then as an international consultant in human development, specializing in women's and girls' education.

Kangbai earned a post-Master's degree in African History from Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, a Master's degree in Economics from Grenoble University in Grenoble, France, and an undergraduate degree in Economics from the Sorbonne University in Paris.

Codou Diaw, Ph.D., 2003

Born and raised in Senegal, Codou Diaw lived in the U.S. for almost 16 years. She received her doctorate from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in the Education Department's interdisciplinary program where her research focused on gender and education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Today, she lives in Nairobi, Kenya where she is Executive Director of the Regional Secretariat for the Forum of African Women Educationalist (FAWE), the leading continent-wide African non-governmental organization that promotes girls' education and advocates for gender equity in African education systems. Headquartered in Nairobi, FAWE advocates for mainstreaming gender at the policy-making level and intervenes in schools and communities to increase awareness about girls' access to school and to improve girls' retention and performance.

After earning her Ph.D., Codou moved back home to Senegal to work as Deputy Director for Education at the Japan International Cooperation Agency. She then immigrated to Geneva, Switzerland where she worked as a Consultant for Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), a non-governmental organization run by women working to engender the peace process in Africa. FAS promotes the leading role of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the African continent. She concurrently worked as a Translator and Interpreter for the World YWCA, Handicap International, and International Conference Volunteers. Codou moved to Nairobi in August 2007 to become Executive Director of FAWE which has national chapters in thirty-two African countries. With this new position at FAWE, she returns to her passion of promoting girls' education in Africa.

Genevieve Yirenyi, Ph.D., 2004

Genevieve Yirenyi has always been a woman on a mission. Born in Ghana, West Africa, Genevieve migrated to the U.S. at the age of five and obtained her Ph.D. when she was 27, becoming the youngest Ph.D. in SisterMentors' history. Today, she is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice focusing on children, adolescents and their families, and she is also a staff psychologist at Baltimore Medical System-Community Health Clinics where she provides mental health services to underserved residents.

Genevieve earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology in Palo Alto, California. She successfully defended her dissertation in 2003 and officially received her doctorate in 2004 after completing a hospital internship. Since obtaining her Ph.D., Genevieve completed a prestigious post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Maryland at Baltimore's School of Medicine-School Mental Health Program.

Carolyn Peoples Veiga, Ph.D., 2004

Carolyn Peoples Veiga received her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, College Park, College of Education, Department of Human Development. Her scholarship focused on adult development and achievement motivation. Today, Carolyn is in private practice as an Educational Consultant. In this capacity, she serves as a dissertation editor, evaluates and analyzes college-level curricula, and presents seminars to college faculty on alternative strategies for educating adult learners returning to college. Carolyn is also an adjunct professor and the mother of two children.

Shona Jackson, Ph.D., 2005

Shona Jackson received her Ph.D. in Modern Thought & Literature from Stanford University. Born in Guyana, South America, today Shona is a tenure-track, Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University in College Station where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on the Caribbean, postcolonial theory, and Africana literature and culture. Shona has published book chapters and journal articles including in the Caribbean Quarterly, and Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism. More recently she edited a 30th anniversary issue of the scholarly journal Callaloo.

Koritha Mitchell, Ph.D., 2005

Koritha Mitchell was the first in her family to go to college. Today, she is a tenure track Assistant Professor of English at Ohio State University (OSU). Koritha earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Recently, Koritha was selected for a prestigious Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Ford Foundation which allows her time off from teaching so that she can write her first book, and better position herself to get tenure. At OSU, she teaches courses on African American identities, 20th century African American literature, and a seminar on critical approaches to Black literatures.

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Girls' Four-Day Visit to New York City

In our most ambitious college visit to date, SisterMentors took 22 girls to visit New York City and three of its most prestigious schools: Barnard College, Columbia University, and New York University. Unlike previous trips, this visit was not just about getting a taste of college. It was also about experiencing one of the most exciting cities in the world.

"It was a great learning experience. It opened my eyes to a lot of new things," said one of the 22 girls. For most of the girls, this was their first visit to New York City. Excitement was high as our bus rolled into the city during mid-afternoon on a cool spring day. One of the youngest girls in our program, an eleven year old fifth grader, gasped and pointed at the skyscrapers as we made our way down a busy Manhattan street.

The girls spent four days in New York City, staying at a hostel in Harlem. The location provided proximity to Barnard and Columbia and the convenience of the city, including its world-famous public transportation. The girls were fascinated by the subway and the musicians that make its tunnels far more colorful than the Metro stations in Washington, D.C. They stopped and danced to the music of a banjo-playing duo called "the Ebony Hillbillies" and stood around curiously watching a musician playing a Trinidadian steel pan --- a musical instrument they had never seen before.

Dean Vivian Taylor, Associate Dean of Students, and Saul Davis, Director of the Science and Technology Program and the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program at Barnard, arranged the girls' two-day visit to the liberal arts college for women. During their stay, the girls were able to see how women undergraduates at Barnard benefit from its small classes and personal attention while having access to the larger research resources at Columbia, its partner school across the street.

On arrival on campus, girls were greeted with a dinner with undergraduate women of color, which gave them a window into college life. The women advised the girls to learn time management, which will be one of their biggest challenges in college. One of the women said that she likes Barnard because of its location which allows her to explore the city. She told girls that the city offers many free concerts and that Central Park is a nearby attraction. Other women explained that they chose Barnard because it is an intimate community where everyone knows each other by name and because it focuses on undergraduates.

In addition to their helpful dialogue with the undergraduates, the girls got a taste of academic life by attending classes and received a guided tour of the campus. And to help with how to pay for college, Susan Lee, a senior financial aid officer, gave a presentation on financial aid.



Girls at The Color Purple on Broadway

Girls Actively Participate in Class Discussion

"This was one of the most exciting and the greatest experiences I have ever had," said one of the girls. On the morning of their second day at Barnard girls sat in on classes and participated in the class discussion. Some of the girls sat in on a first year English seminar, "The Americas: Romanticism and Postmodernism." There were only nine students in attendance and the professor very enthusiastically welcomed SisterMentors girls and made extra copies of the reading material so that girls could be integrated into the class.

The girls stayed interested and focused throughout the class. Although this class was for first year students it was taught at a much higher level. The discussion centered on T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. When the professor asked for a volunteer to read part of the poem, one of SisterMentors' eighth graders raised her hand and then read a few lines. Another girl asked if Eliot had written any books for children and the professor responded that Eliot wrote the book on which the Broadway musical *CATS* is based. As the class moved to that part of the poem written in German, another eighth grader raised her hand and volunteered to read that section aloud, demonstrating the language proficiency she had learned in school. The professor was impressed with her good pronunciation.

The girls learned a lot from the class. The professor gave a brief biography of Eliot, including his life in Paris and England. The class discussed the structure and tone of Eliot's poem, including his use of Chaucer to begin the poem and the shifting multiplicity of voices.

This seminar energized the girls. Some of them talked more with the professor after the class and then talked among themselves about the classes they would like to take in middle and high school next school year. Some of the older girls advised the younger ones about classes they should take in each grade and talked about mistakes they had made in choosing classes in middle and high school.

Columbia University

The girls also visited Columbia where they toured the campus with an African American woman sophomore from Houston, Texas. She encouraged the girls to ask questions about the university. When one of the girls asked, "Why is this university such a big deal?," the undergraduate smiled and responded that Columbia has many Nobel Prize winners and that John F. Kennedy attended the law school.

Visit to New York University

The girls spent their last morning visiting NYU. One of the highlights of their visit was a session with a Latina undergraduate who talked about her experience at the university. When one of the girls asked what makes NYU special, the undergraduate responded that NYU does not have a defined campus so its campus is New York City itself.

The Color Purple, Times Square and The Apollo Theatre

"I loved the Broadway show and I liked taking the subway. It gave me the same experience as most of the people who live in NYC," said one of the girls. One of the highlights of the girls' trip was a surprise: free matinee tickets to see Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* on Broadway. They had been reading the novel during their mentoring sessions with SisterMentors women, and several donors graciously bought tickets for them to see the Broadway musical.

After leaving the show, girls walked to Times Square to look at the bright lights, huge billboards and wide screens. Girls also walked along Amsterdam Avenue in Harlem and got a peek inside the Apollo Theatre.

"This is interesting and exciting! I've always wanted to go to New York City!" declared one of the girls. These words sum up this trip to New York City which the girls are still talking about today.



Shannon Scott, Virginia Commonwealth University

27 Women of Color Doctorates

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Development in Washington, D.C., where she provides training and technical assistance on cultural and linguistic competence. Vivian is the mother of two boys, one in high school and the other in college.

Carol Hedgspeth defended her dissertation and received her doctorate on April 3, 2007. Carol earned her doctorate in Educational Psychology from the Department of Human Development and Psychoeducational Studies in the School of Education at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Her dissertation is titled "Staying the Course: Testing a Structural Model of Black Doctoral Student Persistence Towards Degree Completion at Historically Black Colleges and Universities."

Carol is currently an adjunct professor of Psychology at Trinity University in Washington, D.C, and Vice President of Research and Operations at Cogent Integrations, LLC, in Bowie, Maryland. Her research interests include doctoral student persistence in higher education, computer and health literacy in minority communities, and the importance of culturally competent program evaluation in education.

Carol is the mother of three young girls, including a baby who was born in January 2007 --- three months prior to her dissertation defense and the award of her Ph.D.

"I am an African American woman in my 50s. I decided to pursue my doctoral education in the middle of my professional career because I believed that the knowledge and skills gained through this level of education would help me be more effective in my work.

I joined SisterMentors in October 2002. SisterMentors helped me reduce the isolation and normalized many of the feelings that I was experiencing along the journey. It helped me to make the conceptual transition from the dissertation as a project to pursue disconnected from my life to an ongoing endeavor that must be woven into the fabric of my life.

SisterMentors generated an unanticipated pleasure for me through the expectation to mentor middle and high school girls. My role has been to help them hold on to their dreams, help teach them how to achieve their dreams, and to stand as a visible example that dreams do indeed come true. My role with them helped me to stay on course, too, as my messages to them were also messages to myself. We saw our future in each other. They were a blessing to me. I can only hope that I have been a blessing to them."

*Vivian Jackson, Ph.D.
SisterMentors Graduate, 2007*

Social Skills and Etiquette Workshop



"This is one of the best days of my life," said one of the girls after our annual Social Skills and Etiquette Workshop in May. 25 girls from Washington, D.C., Alexandria, Virginia, and Prince George's County, Maryland were treated to a three-hour workshop at the luxurious Madison hotel, located a few blocks away from the White House in downtown Washington, D.C. Now in its third year, this workshop continues to receive unanimous rave reviews from SisterMentors girls. As in the past, the workshop was funded by one of our donors, Christine Boehm and led by Fannie Allen of the prestigious Allen Etiquette Institution. The theme of the workshop this year was: "Always do your best personally and academically. Empower yourself!"

"I learned new things I didn't know about. Now I know how to eat properly and I know what not to do that is considered rude. Thank you for the experience. I will take the advice with me," said one of the girls. The social skills part of the workshop began with a story from Ms. Allen about Queen Elizabeth's recent visit to the White House. Ms. Allen related that a gentleman, who is quite wealthy, unfortunately declined an invitation to dine with the Queen because he did not know how to use the silverware. She then praised girls for their willingness to learn about social skills and etiquette.

The social skills part of the workshop emphasized associating with positive people, proper attire and speaking in full sentences. Ms. Allen told girls that it is better to be alone than in the wrong company and that they should stay away from friends who are negative and who may try to discourage their dreams. Addressing proper attire, Ms. Allen cautioned that low cut tops are not appropriate school wear and that girls can get attention from boys and their teachers by doing positive things. When addressing word enunciation, Ms. Allen advised avoiding slang and speaking in full sentences. Dr. Lewis suggested that girls think about who they are addressing when communicating and told girls that they should use different vocabulary and intonation when talking with their friends than they would use when talking to a job interviewer, for example.

When asked if any of them have a profile on My Space or Facebook, all of the girls raised their hands. My Space and Facebook are Web sites that allow people to create profiles with personal information and pictures and to connect with each other through these profiles. Ms. Allen told girls that they should always think about potential job opportunities and their personal safety when deciding what they should have on My Space or Facebook. An employer recently told her that part of his review of a candidate for a position includes looking at their pages on Facebook, so Ms. Allen cautioned the girls to always think about how the material they include on their profiles would appear to a prospective employer. And to maintain their personal safety, girls discussed the sort of personal information they should not include on Web sites.

"Exceptional," "excellent," "marvelous," were some of the words the girls used when evaluating the workshop. As the etiquette part of the workshop began, Ms. Allen designated the host and guest of honor at each table and outlined their responsibilities. As the girls began to sit at the table, she mentioned that if they get confused about which place setting belongs to them that they should remember the general rule that liquids are on the right and solids are on the left. As the bread came to the table, girls learned that they should break off and butter only the small piece that they can eat in one bite and nothing more. They were also cautioned that the bread is not the main event so they should not eat so much bread that they are unable to enjoy their full meal.

"This was a really great experience so thank you," said one of the girls. For the first time, tea was included at the end of the meal. Each girl received a handout describing the origins of tea and regions of the world where it is currently grown. Girls were told not to dunk their tea bag in their water or wrap it around the spoon but to instead allow it to steep and then place it on the dish on the table before sipping.

Year after year, new and continuing girls express strong positive feelings about this workshop which, because of their enthusiasm, has become a valuable aspect of SisterMentors' contribution to the development of girls of color.

"SisterMentors has helped my daughter Ruhama in a lot of ways. The college trips have opened a lot of doors for her future. The mentoring sessions and just talking to Dr. Lewis have given her a lot of knowledge and ideas. That's why I had Ruth, Ruhama's little sister, join SisterMentors. It's the best program my kids have ever gotten involved in."

*Elizabeth Negussie
Mother of Two Daughters in SisterMentors*

Our Graduates and Where They are Today...

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Koritha has a strong commitment to mentoring students. She served on a panel for Ohio State's Voices of the Black Academy graduate student group, where she advised students on academic conferences, including writing proposals and applying to and speaking at conferences. Her commitment to mentoring extends to future generations, and she recently became a volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters. When not in the classroom, Koritha is giving talks at other universities, including Northwestern University where she will lecture on James Baldwin and Theatre this fall.

Losang Rabgey, Ph.D., 2006

When she earned her Ph.D. in 2006, Losang Rabgey made history as one of the first Tibetan women in the West to get a doctorate. Today, she is the Executive Director of Machik, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., that works to improve the lives of Tibetans in Tibet with an emphasis on women's and girls' education. In 2006, Losang received the National Geographic Emerging Explorer Award for her work in Tibet.

Under her leadership, Machik established the first school in a rural village in Tibet. The school serves 275 children of farmers, nomads, and semi-nomads and has an unprecedented requirement that fifty percent of the students must be girls. The students are hungry for knowledge and are outperforming children at more well-established schools in the region.

Born in a refugee camp in India after her parents fled Tibet following China's invasion, Losang and her family emigrated to Canada where she received most of her education. She is part of the first generation in her family to go to college. Losang received her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of London. Her dissertation is the first doctoral study of secular Tibetan women in India and the West.

"I thank SisterMentors for teaching me to create a posture to succeed: to have conversations confidently with my advisor; to ask for help when I needed it; to look at my research from fresh perspectives. Being part of such a dynamic group of women helped me realize that being the only one in a family to go after a degree is an awesome feat and responsibility. SisterMentors provided opportunities for me and other women to learn such valuable scholarly and life lessons --- lessons that transcend the classroom experience. I benefited from the important bonds of friendship, non-competitiveness, and mutual respect that are sometimes conspicuously absent from the world of academia."

Carol Hedgspeth, Ph.D.
SisterMentors Graduate, 2007

Thank You Very Much!

Special thanks to Schiff Hardin for its generous support.

Thank you to all of our wonderful donors and supporters, including: Dawn Nelson, Muriel Reed, Adrienne Clair, Regina Y. Speed-Bost, Eileen King, Paula Stern, Francisca Ayodeji Akala, Glynn D. Key, Charlene L. Holtz, John Valery White, Steve Aaron and Robert Everett Aaron, Geeta Paray-Clarke and George Elliott Clarke, Lee McCraw Hoffman, Ramsey Selden, Adriane Williams and Vivian Hollifield, Deborah B. Gould, Carol Wheeler, Jean Ross, Michael Moore, Kathy D. Smith, Barbara Burton, Edward Hayes, Margery Sullivan, Anjanette Milladge, J. Cathy Fogel, Nancy Folger, Richard Glick, Paul Nordstrom, Mary Benge, Elizabeth and Gray Rothkopf, Wendy Demming, Gloria A. Wiggan, Jim Slattery, Jackie Thomas, Donya Douglas, Vivian Jackson, Codou Diaw, Paula and Moses Boyd, Paula Stern, Clint Vince, Howard Bauleke, Nigel and Denise Meyers, Alice Douglas, Faith Wheeler, Sara Green, Dale and Jeanette Goodrich, Nellie Gargarita, Renee Wessels and Bruce R. Grogan, Susan S. Kaye, Elizabeth H. Peters, Kathryn Grant, James V. Meath, Ghada Attieh, Bradley T. Winter, Herbert and Rita Posner, Elizabeth Cheng, Elizabeth Nash, Christine Gaus, Andrea Reeve, Ingrid and Andrew Crane, Shari Wilson, James and Marylou Cantarella, Genevieve Yirenskyi, Sarah Posner and Doug Wolfe, and Philip Cote-Colisson.

Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers: Mary Helen Coleman, Cherry Powell, Brenna Dwyer, Florence Lumdsen, Shona Jackson, Ph.D., Reverend Kumari de Sachy, Dawn Nelson, and Sarah Posner. Thanks also to Susan Leong, Michael Sherman, Timothy Boller and Montana Cole for donating funds for Broadway tickets for our girls. Special thanks to the Grammy Award Winning A Cappella Ensemble, Sweet Honey in the Rock, for their CD Release Party benefiting SisterMentors, and to Gisele Mills for helping to make it happen.

And, as always, very special thanks to the girls in SisterMentors who help organize and run fundraising events, including Cindy Ayala, Ruhama Yared, Alinah Mphofe, and Kedest Firdaweke. And thanks to all of the SisterMentors women who help fundraise.

SisterMentors' 10th Anniversary Celebration and Fundraiser

Please join us for SisterMentors' 10th Anniversary Celebration and Fundraiser on Wednesday, November 7, 2007 from 6pm to 8:30pm at Schiff Hardin LLP, 1666 K Street N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20006. Please RSVP at www.sistermentors.org or call 202-778-6424. Come celebrate with us. Good Food, Drinks, and Music!

From the Mother of One of Our Girls

My daughter Roxie is off to Savannah College of Art and Design this fall and I want to thank SisterMentors for the big role it played in helping my daughter. College was always in our plans for Roxie, but when she started SisterMentors five years ago in eighth grade she began to think more seriously about college and beyond. The women scholars, many of whom are from backgrounds very much like her own, are examples of the value of an education and inspired Roxie to set her academic goals beyond high school and a Bachelor's degree.

SisterMentors' annual college trips gave Roxie the opportunity to experience a college campus years in advance. She met undergraduate women of color and participated in workshops on financial aid. She also learned about college applications and the importance of planning for college. She took that knowledge and applied it when it was time to begin her college search in earnest last school year while in twelfth grade.

SisterMentors also played a key role during the actual college application process and this past summer, when there were still important issues that needed to be addressed, SisterMentors helped Roxie to find solutions so she could attend the school of her choice.

Not only did SisterMentors instill a desire to continue her education, but it also boosted Roxie's self-esteem

because her creativity was acknowledged and praised. Women in the group understood Roxie's issues with Attention Deficit Disorder and offered advice and shared their own experiences. They were proof that she, too, could work with her disorder and excel academically.

I was delighted when Roxie began taking my youngest daughter, Jessye, who was in fifth grade, along with her to the mentoring sessions and social skills and etiquette workshop. Now Roxie is off to college and Jessye, who just started sixth grade, has begun attending SisterMentors on her own.



Dr. Shireen Lewis and Roxie Jairrels

This program was a Godsend and an anchor for Roxie --- a place to shine and be truly appreciated for who she is and the gifts she possesses, while being polished by women who pushed her to work hard, be gutsy and reach for the stars. I am sure that Jessye will also reach her highest potential while in SisterMentors.

— Nancy Cox Jairrels

"I have always wanted to take Kedest to visit colleges in the area but I don't have the time or money to do so. I love SisterMentors for the college tours, etiquette workshops, mentoring sessions, and the list goes on! Kedest is now in high school and has been with the program since seventh grade. Since then, she has started to take her school work more seriously. Even though I'm not ready to let her out of the house, I'm glad she's getting ready for a better life and a brighter future --- a future better than the one I have. The whole reason I moved to the United States was that I wanted my children to have a better education. And for a mother with four girls, it's nice to know there's a program like SisterMentors to help them stay on the right path. I'm glad that SisterMentors is all about just that, giving girls a future beyond cooking, cleaning, and having children at a young age. I can't wait for my youngest daughter to join the program, so that she too would understand that education is very important."

*Zuriashwork Esubalew
Mother of SisterMentors Girl*

The Ladd, Thrasher, and Patch Award

Very special thanks to Jenny Ladd, Sue Thrasher, and Penny Patch for their wonderful gift of \$2,600 to help a SisterMentors woman to complete her dissertation for her doctorate. This legacy of "passing on" funds to help a woman complete her education demonstrates a true understanding of our connectedness. Thank you so much.

For more on the Ladd, Thrasher, and Patch Award, visit our website at www.sistermentors.org.

PLEASE SUPPORT SISTERMENTORS

In honor of SisterMentors' 10th anniversary, I would like to support the fundraising campaign to raise \$120,000 by December 2007. My donation will help SisterMentors to continue mentoring women and girls of color.

Choose this:

DONATION

Please send your donation by December 1, 2007

Here is my donation of \$500 or more

I cannot give \$500 or more at this time but here is my donation of (please choose one):

\$350

\$250

\$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:

PLEDGE

Please send in your pledge today

I would like to make a pledge to SisterMentors during this special time. I therefore pledge to make a monthly donation of \$100 each month in honor of SisterMentors, starting December 2007 and continuing to December 2008.

I cannot make a monthly pledge of \$100 starting December 2007 and continuing to December 2008, but I can pledge _____ for ____ months, beginning in _____.

Print Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

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 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 middle and high schools. The women and girls are African American, Latina, Asian American, and women and girls who are immigrants.

Our goal is to help stop the high drop-out rate among girls of color in middle and high school and also 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 2005, out of 51.4 percent of 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 27 women of color to complete their dissertations and get their doctorates since September 1997. We helped send our first group of girls to college in Fall 2007. We mentor two groups of girls in schools in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

EduSeed's Board of Directors

We would like to thank Michael Tajchman, one of EduSeed's founding board members, for his years of service. Thanks also to Carolyn Peoples Veiga and Michael Link. We will miss all of you. Welcome to new board member, Howard Bauleke.

EduSeed's current board members are the following:

- Howard Bauleke
- Timothy Boller
- Claudia Cantarella
- Montana Cole
- Shireen Lewis
- Selena Mendy Singleton

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

1666 K Street N.W., Suite 300

Washington, D.C. 20006

www.sistermentors.org

www.eduseed.org

Promoting Education Among Women and Girls of Color

Fall/Winter 2007 Newsletter

10th Anniversary Issue