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## Area educators urge girls to 'make noise'

### Pilot program hopes to boost self-esteem

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Seventh grade can be a pivotal year for girls who find themselves becoming young women.

Two veteran educators - retired Springfield Local Schools Superintendent Cynthia Beekley and St. Ursula Academy President Jane Charette - have launched a pilot program aimed at developing leadership skills and self-esteem in seventh-grade girls.

They are looking for 25 girls from public, private, charter, and even home schools in Lucas and Wood counties to take part in the inaugural Young Women Making Noise Leadership Academy.

"I think it's really the year in which girls change from girls to young women and really begin to think more seriously about their future and their whole relationship with other people - not only boys but other girls too," Ms. Beekley said.

"... Girls also are developing a level of confidence in themselves and their abilities or not."

Letters were sent to principals at middle and junior high schools throughout the two counties in May, and so far 13 girls have submitted applications for what will be a seven-session program beginning in August.

"We want to get as diverse a group as we can from as many different schools in the area as we can so that we have a nice mix of girls," said Ms. Beekley, who helped create the Youth Leadership Toledo program for high school sophomores. "One thing that kids in Youth Leadership Toledo say is that they enjoy meeting kids from different schools."

Ms. Charette said the monthly sessions will run from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at various Toledo area sites.

At each session, a professional will talk to the girls about her career choice and how she got to where she is. There also will be a spiritual component to each session.

"We hope to have a representative from a variety of faiths to sort of begin the day with a reflection of some kind," Ms. Beekley said.

"We're not necessarily trying to encourage that. It will be more of a reflection to think about that spiritual side that doesn't always get as much attention as the physical, mental, or emotional sides."

The first session will be at Camp Miakonda in West Toledo and will include teamwork activities such as a low-rope course and a presentation on learning styles.

The second session, dubbed "A Good Look at Myself," will be at the 577 Foundation in Perrysburg. Ms. Charette said sessions will include nutrition and exercise, a yoga class, and makeup and dressing fashionably but appropriately for their age. They'll make lunch together and talk about etiquette.

Other sessions will deal with the importance of community service, setting educational goals, using technology wisely, and life after middle school.

"When we get to the end, they're going to give a presentation about themselves to their parents and incorporate what they've learned along the way," Ms. Charette said. "Our goals are self-esteem, speaking up, jumping out, and not being afraid to try new things," she added.

The girls will spend a day on the University of Toledo campus to look at college life and talk about studying and keeping up grades.

"We're going to expose them to women role models," Ms. Charette said. "We're going to talk about balance in their life. ...We hope to equip them, to give them a little jump start to help them be successful in high school. We want to give them a little life plan to start working on."

St. Ursula Academy is sponsoring the program. Both women said they hope to fund and expand the program through grants and other community support.

Information about the academy and an application are at [toledosua.org](http://toledosua.org) and at [springfieldlocal.schools.net](http://springfieldlocal.schools.net). Applications are due July 15 and selections will be made by Aug. 1.

The cost is \$150 per girl. Ms. Charette said scholarships will be available.

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