

## **Girls Inc. Expands to Chicago Former City Colleges Exec Arshele Stevens Tapped as CEO**

*Chicago, June 27, 2017* – Girls Inc., the national organization inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold, has launched a Chicago affiliate. Arshele Stevens, previously President of the Kennedy-King City College in Englewood, is serving as the Chief Executive Officer.

In partnership with schools and local organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, Girls Inc. provides long-lasting mentoring relationships, a pro-girl environment and research-based programming to equip girls to overcome serious challenges and prepare them for academic and long-term success. Girls Inc. also advocates for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls.

Tina Tchen, former Executive Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls, explained the importance of bringing Girls Inc. research-based programming to the city. "By empowering girls to navigate gender, economic and social barriers, Girls Inc. is not only changing the lives of the girls it serves, it is also preparing Chicago's community leaders of tomorrow."

Judy Vredenburg, Girls Inc. national President and CEO, further explained, "Coming to Chicago is part of our five-year growth strategy to double the number of girls we serve, particularly in low-income communities. We're committed to its success."

Chicago programming will begin this fall with a focus on girls in grades K-3 at Martha Ruggles Elementary School in the Chatham/Greater Grand Crossing area. Girls Inc. of Chicago has tailored its efforts to meet the specific needs of the city in partnership with Chicago Public Schools. The three-pronged curriculum will focus on healthy bodies, academic achievement and life skills.

"It's so important to position young girls to be our future leaders by giving them the support and skills they need to succeed," said CPS Chief Education Officer, Dr. Janice K. Jackson. "We're pleased to welcome Girls Inc. as a partner as we work toward the shared goal of supporting girls and communities by helping build key life skills."

Arshele Stevens added, "We're beginning with Kindergarten because it's critical to intervene at this age. Research has shown that girls as young as six start to believe that certain activities aren't for them because they don't think they are smart enough. In fact, at age six, girls are significantly less likely to associate brilliance with their own gender. As we raise additional funding, we plan to expand to additional grades and other schools."

Girls Inc. of Chicago has also put in place a strong executive board chaired by Jean McLaren, President of MARC USA's local office, and a team of proven executives at leading Chicago corporations including Dentons, Grant Thornton, Ingredion, Remington Seed and Walgreens.

Melody Hobson, President of Ariel Investments and education activist, emphasized the broader community impact of Girls Inc., “In light of the serious issues our youth are facing, it is so important that we develop the talent and potential of Chicago’s girls. Girls Inc. will play a strong role in giving young girls in our struggling communities the tools they need to succeed and help our city thrive.”

Jean McLaren concluded, “We are grateful for the investment of Girls Inc. in Chicago and are so pleased to have a CEO with Arshele’s proven skills leading our efforts. She brings an outstanding track record of producing high quality outcomes for educational organizations, combined with a personal passion for our mission. We are also fortunate to have such a strong community commitment represented by those serving on the board.”

###

#### About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart and bold through direct service and advocacy. Its comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. These positive outcomes are achieved through three core elements: *people* - trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships; *environment* - girls-only, physically and emotionally safe, where there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations and mutual respect; and *programming* - research-based, hands-on and minds-on, age-appropriate, meeting the needs of today’s girls. Informed by girls and their families, Girls Inc. advocates for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls. [girlsincofchicago.org](http://girlsincofchicago.org)

#### About Arshele Stevens

As President of the Kennedy-King City College, Ms. Stevens led the charge to achieve re-accreditation and grew enrollment, degrees awarded and students transitioning to four-year colleges. As a result, Kennedy-King City College received the 2015 “Rising Star” Award for Rapid Student Improvement from Aspen Institute. She previously served as Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer for the City Colleges of Chicago and Chief Information Officer for Chicago Public Schools where she implemented one of the first broad technology solutions.