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GIRLS RIGHTS WEEK*, April 30 – May 6:

LOCAL MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SHARE THEIR WORRIES AND EXPECTATIONS IN GIRLS INC. OF THE CENTRAL COAST SURVEY

Pressure to have sex and affordability of a college education among their biggest worries, survey shows

While a new survey shows many American girls are feeling increased pressure to be “supergirls” - perfect in body, mind and spirit - some girls on the Central Coast are finding ways of coping with those pressures.

The findings of a national survey, “The Supergirl Dilemma,” are being released today (April 30), the first day of Girls Rights Week, which runs through Sunday.

The survey was commissioned by Girls Inc., a nationwide organization devoted to making girls “smart, strong and bold” through self-improvement programs and community projects. The survey was done in March 2006. It polled 2,065 students in grades three to 12, and 1,005 adults 18 and over.

Perhaps of more interest to the Salinas Valley and communities on the Monterey Peninsula are the results of a local survey that was inspired by the Supergirls survey. Of particular worry to local girls is the constant pressure to have sex, and the increasing costs of a college education.

The local affiliate, Girls Inc of the Central Coast, focused its survey on about 100 middle-school- and high-school-age girls involved in its programs.

Locally, the survey found that feeling pressured to have sex was among their bigger worries. Also, they indicated that, though college is a big part of their future plans, how to afford it is of great concern.

The girls also were asked about other worries. The percentages below show how many girls of the total survey sample felt strongly about a particular worry:

- Getting good grades in school (82 percent),
- Someone close to me will get sick or die (58 percent)

- College will be too expensive for me (56 percent)
- My weight (43 percent)
- Other people thinking I'm cool (29 percent)
- Being teased or made fun of (41 percent)
- Being pressured to have sex (50 percent)
- Getting AIDS (31 percent)
- How I look (32 percent)
- Being beaten up or attacked at school (22 percent)
- Dying young (13 percent)
- Getting in an accident (9 percent)

Local middle-school girls are coping fairly well, according to the survey. When asked about self-image – “I have a lot of friends,” get good grades, happy at school, get along with my parents, feel safe - more than 60 percent of the girls agreed. When asked about if they felt stressed, sad, bored or if they got into trouble, 40 percent or fewer girls said they did.

The good news is that girls and teenagers are finding ways of coping with and working through the challenges of growing up. Girls Inc. officials believe their programs have something to do with those attitudes and beliefs. They provide 500 to 600 girls a year with programs that help build self-esteem, career objectives, work ethic and community involvement.

Girls' Rights Week is an annual event sponsored by the national Girls Inc. It was created to encourage Girls Inc. chapters across the nation to conduct a dialogue on girls issues and concerns with their communities. Each year has a different theme or focus. This year, the focus is on the *The Supergirl Dilemma*, our new research report, as inspiration to empower girls to develop a strong sense of self in the face of pressures they face.

Online:

GIRLS INC. SUPERGIRL SURVEY:

www.girlsinc.org