



Quotes from Girls Inc. graduates

Maryllu Javier, 19, is a freshman at Sonoma State University. The Seaside resident is the second of three siblings in her family to attend college.

- Seaside High graduate, Class of 2006.
- Career goal: Teacher

Quote: "ECHO is where everything started for me. I first learned about it when I was a sophomore (age 16). Before ECHO I was the shy girl, always sat in the back of class, hardly asked questions. I was scared to speak out. I had no goals. It was just hard because I was dealing with a lot of pressure in high school with drugs and alcohol ... and with the images of girls in the media, trying to have a perfect body and everything.

"I joined ECHO and I changed everything around. I view life so differently now. I have goals. I have many dreams to accomplish and I can speak my mind."

Lily Cardenas, 21, is a junior at San Jose State University. A Salinas resident, she is the second in her family of six siblings to attend college.

- Major: Psychology. Minor: Spanish.
- Alisal High graduate, Class of 2004
- Career goal: School counselor
- Member, board of directors, Girls Inc. of the Central Coast

Quote: "Because of Girls Inc. I found out that I really want to help teenagers. During high school, some teenagers fall through the cracks. I want to be there to encourage them, to show them that it can be done. ... I've never been afraid to speak my mind. Girls Inc. kind of enhanced that. Girls Inc. isn't just a quiet group. We get involved. Girls Inc. asks participants to stand up for something. To be strong, smart and bold. Those aren't just small words. They're huge."