This fall, Girls Inc. launched a STEM-focused club at YWCA Midtown for middle schoolers! Through our partnership with We Share Solar, girls got the chance to learn the basics of electricity and circuits, and use their knowledge to assemble solar suitcases. Each solar suitcase contained a solar panel, charge controller, light bulb, battery and wires to connect each part together.

Girls in STEMinist Club used their knowledge and common electric tools provided to successfully wire the solar suitcase and assemble all the pieces together. The girls showed knowledge in using a digital multimeter to test the solar suitcase, making sure the wires were secured and safe.

One of the girls stated that their favorite part of the We Share Solar suitcase was connecting the wires to the circuit board and screwing it in place. Another girl stated, “When the light turned on, my heart melted because people will have light and use it for their education and daily life.”

The girls will be making a global impact by providing two solar suitcases to the Kakuma Refugee camp in Kenya. The solar suitcases will benefit 40,000 students in Kenya and will provide light for their classroom. The girls were really excited to finish the solar suitcase. As a final touch, they decorated the suitcases with their names, pictures and letters for the students in Kenya!

Did you know? 1.2 billion people live without access to electricity. About half of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Meet our All-Star Shanika Lambert!

Girls Resolution and Prevention (RAP) program Lead Youth Counselor, Shanika Lambert, has been selected as a Capella University Fellows Scholarship Winner for Capella’s January 2020 Program start. Shanika was one of seven winners out of a very competitive applicant pool. She will receive a full scholarship – all tuition paid for her Master’s in Social Work degree program at Capella University.

By obtaining a Master’s degree, Shanika hopes to continue working with youth in a greater capacity. “I truly believe it takes a village to raise our youth and I want to continue to be a part of that village. My goal is to build bonds and relationships with the youth I serve and train other individuals, especially those who work with youth of color, so there is not a constant disconnect and non-trusting relationships made with people in positions of power. In addition, I want to work towards changing systems and policies in youth programming so they are more equitable for the youth being served.”

Thank You to Our Amazing Volunteers!

Girls Inc. afterschool benefits from great volunteers across the community who support our weekly programs. This year, we were excited to form a new partnership with the University of Minnesota College of Science and Engineering Student Board (SESB)! Members of their outreach team have been visiting afterschool groups to share exciting new STEM activities, including building Rube Goldberg machines, exploring machine learning, playing with polymers and learning about climate change and pollution.

Girls have learned about a range of SESB members’ education pathways, including computer science to chemical engineering to astronomy! In one experiment, girls simulated an oil spill on water and were given tools to try to clean up the spill. Lucia noted that “no matter how much you try to clean it, there will always be really little bubbles of oil in the water. It’s impossible for it to look the same as it was before.”

Diving into STEM projects with college students helps Girls Inc. participants create connections between real-life issues and potential areas of study — and get empowered to use their STEM skills to create change in the world!
In early December, YWCA Minneapolis Girls Inc. Eureka! hosted the 3rd Annual Winter Mixer, a chance for all five Eureka! cohorts to come together for winter-themed social time!

Eurekans ate dinner and played a large game of Giants, Wizards and Elves. Then they spent time rotating between different stations with a variety of activities, including: insta-snow, mason jar snow globes, light-up LED cards, snowflakes, card games and board games.

Eurekans also enjoyed a hot chocolate bar with marshmallows and candy canes, gingerbread house decorating and taking Polaroid photos with friends in the photo booth! Youth and staff also started a YWCA Minneapolis Girls Inc. Eureka! mural, each participant adding their handprint to a canvas that will eventually hang in the Girls Inc. office. At the end of the night, one Eurekan shared, “I had so much fun tonight! It was fun to spend time with Eurekans in the other cohorts!”

In November, Girls Inc. hosted a Self-Care workshop! We made bath bombs, self-care mini magazines, stress balls and snacks, and talked about different areas in our life where we can focus on healthy decision-making.

Some of the participants discovered new areas of self-care: learning new things, working on physical strength, eating healthy and getting to know new people.

We love these workshops that bring together participants from across Eureka!, Girls RAP and Girls Inc. afterschool sites. Look for several workshop opportunities coming up this spring!

This fall, we welcomed mentors from Xcel Energy at one of our 4th-5th grade sites, to connect girls with women in different careers! Participants explored what it means to be strong, smart and bold with their mentors through lunch activities and discussions, from illustrating their visible and invisible strengths, to goal setting, to learning about comfort zones. Thank you, Xcel Energy for this great partnership!
YWCA Minneapolis represents Girls Inc. on a national scale! Samia, a Eureka! participant, and Elena, YWCA’s Girls Inc. Afterschool Coordinator, were selected as 2019 Girls Inc. Healthy Sexuality Champions. They joined one other student and eight staff from across the country to provide Girls Inc. with insight and ideas about current healthy sexuality programming resources, needs of young people and actions Girls Inc. should take to support programs by YWCA Minneapolis.

Girls Inc. has given Samia a space to learn about her body. “With all girls, it’s more comfortable to bring up questions, and we explore issues without judgment about my culture and beliefs,” Samia explained. She felt “really heard” in the Champions gathering and noted that, as the only Muslim present, she was able to bring a unique perspective to the topic and do things for others from her background. Samia is bringing her voice back to YWCA Minneapolis as Girls Inc. develops peer education opportunities for older youth. “I really like that teens have a voice in Girls Inc. — it gives us the confidence to stand up for other things and issues outside of programming,” she added. Samia is in our Graduate Eureka! cohort and plans to become a nurse-midwife.

Calling our next cohort of Eureka! participants

Eureka! is an intensive five-year summer and school-year program for girls and non-binary youth in 8th through 12th grade, focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and preparing them for the next step in their education post high school.

Youth are eligible to apply as current 7th graders (8th graders in Fall 2020).

Now accepting applications!

For applications and more information, visit us online at ywcampls.org/girlsinc or contact YWCA Minneapolis Girls Inc. at 612-215-4369 or girlsinc@ywcampls.org.