

# COLLEGE TOUR REPORT 2011



PEARLS  
FOR TEEN GIRLS INC.

# About Us

PEARLS for Teen Girls is committed to being the community's signature program for maximizing girls' self-development. True girl/adult partnerships result in building and living PEARLS attributes: **Personal Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Respect, Leadership, Support.**

PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc., is a dynamic leadership development organization serving at-risk, primarily African American and Latina girls, ages 10 to 19 in Milwaukee. PEARLS helps girls achieve in school, avoid teen pregnancy, and use their personal power to achieve their goals and dreams.

PEARLS recognizes that the *two greatest barriers to self-sufficiency* for Milwaukee's at-risk girls

are *lack of education and teen pregnancy*. Thus, in order to address systemic poverty among at-risk girls, one must concentrate on raising academic performance and lowering teen pregnancy rates. For these reasons, PEARLS remains unequivocally committed to two overarching long-term goals:

1. To increase high school graduation and college acceptance rates among Milwaukee's girls of color.
2. To work toward the goal set by the United Way of Greater Milwaukee to decrease teen pregnancy rates by 46 percent by 2015.

## WHERE AND HOW PROGRAMS ARE OFFERED

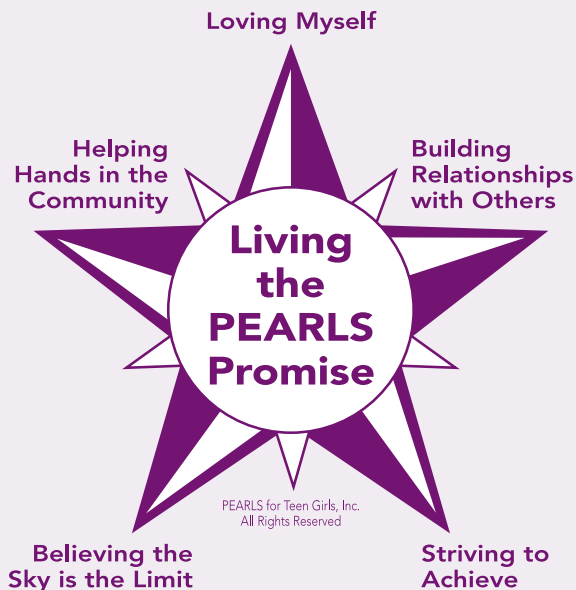
PEARLS programs are girls-only, safe-space gatherings that meet once weekly after school, during school or on Saturdays at local schools and youth serving organizations. A typical PEARLS group serves 20 to 25 girls and PEARLS expects to serve at least 850 girls in 2011. A typical PEARLS session features a guided conversation led by a highly trained Adult Program Coordinator and an assisting Teen Facilitator. PEARLS reaches into the community and has a strong presence throughout Milwaukee. Currently, PEARLS runs its 24 groups and programs in partnership with 19 various Milwaukee schools and neighborhood community sites.



Banner School  
 Business & Economics Academy of Milwaukee (BEAM)  
 CEO Leadership Academy  
 Hamilton High School  
 Keefe Avenue School  
 Milwaukee Christian Center  
 Milwaukee College Prep - Lindsay Heights  
 Milwaukee College Prep - Metcalfe Park  
 Milwaukee Community Cyber School  
 Milwaukee Health Services  
 Neu Life Community Center  
 South Milwaukee Middle School  
 St. Joan Antida High School  
 Tenor High School  
 Thurston CLC  
 Urban Roots / All People's Church  
 Westside Academy  
 YMCA and YWCA

## PEARLS Leadership Compass: Guiding Girls to Reach Their Goals

PEARLS created and uses a national model for youth-driven goal setting. The PEARLS Leadership Compass incorporates five points within which goals are set: Loving Myself, Striving to Achieve, Building Relationships with Others, Believing the Sky is the Limit, and Helping Hands in the Community. These points represent areas for personal development that result in a whole, balanced person who believes in her ability to meet life's challenges.



## PEARLS Girls Are Shining

The past year has proved to be an exciting one for PEARLS for Teen Girls. In 2010, PEARLS educational support programs opened the pathway to success for 791 Milwaukee girls! Plus, PEARLS girls achieved these outstanding outcomes:

- **97%** of PEARLS 2010 high school seniors graduated.
- **97%** of 2010 graduates were accepted to at least one college in the fall of 2010.
- **100%** of all 791 PEARLS girls avoided teen pregnancy in 2010.
- **150** girls participated in College Readiness and Access services, with 34 having their own volunteer Higher Education Coach.
- **88%** of PEARLS girls set a goal, with 69% achieving that goal.

## Vision for Expansion

The need for PEARLS programming in Milwaukee far exceeds PEARLS' current capacity. In 2010, PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc. embarked on a year-long planning process to determine whether, under what circumstances, and in what timeframe PEARLS program could authentically be expanded to serve a significantly larger number of Milwaukee at-risk girls who face daunting barriers to success.

Led by Co-Chairs Michelle Nettles (Senior Director of Diversity at Miller Coors) and Don Layden, Jr. (Partner at Quarles and Brady) the 14-member community planning committee studied the need and potential models for program expansion. At the May 3, 2011 PEARLS Board of Directors meeting, the planning committee recommended the *10,000 Girls Initiative* as a multi-phase process of growth. The Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the *10,000 Girls Initiative* recommendations and is implementing the project in five distinct phases of development.



# College Tour 2011

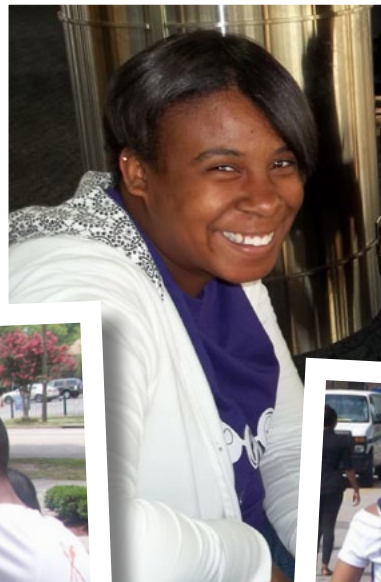
The 2011 College Tour ran from June 26 to July 2. Fifteen girls, accompanied by three PEARLS Adult Program Coordinators, visited seven schools in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. In order to attend the tour, girls must be completing 7th through 11th grades. Below are the PEARLS Girls who attended, their grade in spring 2011, and the location of their PEARLS group site.

Aciana - 11th - St. Joan Antida High School  
 Akilah - 8th - Urban Roots/All People's Church  
 Alexis - 9th - Tenor High School  
 Ashantia - 7th - Neu Life Community Center  
 Cathy - 8th - Milwaukee Christian Center  
 Emily - 7th - South Milwaukee Middle School  
 Jamea - 8th - Milwaukee Health Services  
 Julissa - 8th - South Milwaukee Middle School  
 Kaylah - 9th - Hamilton High School  
 Ke'Adre - 8th - BEAM  
 Kourtlyn - 9th - Milwaukee Health Services  
 Marshanette - 9th - YWCA  
 Niesh - 8th - Milwaukee Health Services  
 Shantee - 9th - Milwaukee Health Services  
 Tamyra - 8th - Neu Life Community Center

## Colleges Visited on Tour

The tour included stops at seven schools to give girls a wide range of campus experiences. The schools offered fully-guided campus tours as well as information on tuition, entrance requirements, majors, degrees and financial aid, and opportunities to talk with staff and students. Schools toured included: Hampton University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, Claflin University, South Carolina State University, and Benedict College.

Tour participants also engaged in cultural field trips including experiencing the Virginia Beach Boardwalk, Colonial Williamsburg as well as taking a tour of the Historical Columbia Foundation.



## College Access and Readiness

**PEARLS'** overall program consists of a dedicated focus on girls' self-development through authentic girl/adult partnerships. Recognizing that education is the foundation for a self-sufficient life, PEARLS helps girls develop the underlying skills critical to long term success in middle and high school and to set goals and work toward college admission and graduation. Some of PEARLS specific education-focused program components include:

- **Goal Setting:** PEARLS' nationally-recognized Goal Setting Initiative is a cornerstone of our curriculum and a key strategy for helping girls achieve academic success. Girls learn that success is built progressively – one test, one grade and one class at a time – and is rooted in their own habits, skills, and daily commitments.
- **Higher Education Coach (HEC) Program:** HECs are adult volunteers who are paired with high school girls who want to plan for college. HECs assist girls with evaluating college choices and completing admissions, financial aid and scholarship applications. This kind of focused support from an adult mentor can be critical, especially for “first generation” students as they navigate through the increasingly complex college application and acceptance process.
- **National College Tour:** PEARLS annual National College Tour is designed to give girls the vision, inspiration and confidence needed to vigorously pursue post-secondary education. The tour includes a special focus on historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). Research reveals that HBCUs have the highest graduation rate for African American university students in the nation.
- **Wisconsin College Tours:** PEARLS offers Wisconsin College Tours for girls in grades 7-11. Annually, girls tour up to seven college campuses that are in geographic reach from home.

- **Alumnae Association:** This program supports PEARLS graduates who have moved on to college or careers and also connects PEARLS grads who are in college with younger PEARLS girls.

### Off to College

Congratulations to the 2011 PEARLS high school graduates who have been accepted to the following schools for the fall 2011 semester:

Akarah Fortson	Fort Valley State University
Alizabeth Grant	Chicago State University
Beanca Buie	Kalamazoo College
Breona Love	Wisconsin Lutheran College
Charmaine Clark	Alverno College
Cynthia Tyler	MATC or Alverno College
Dennayia Brown	Mount Mary College
Daria Gainey	York University
Ebony McGhee	Howard University*
Jade Casey-Reed	University of Wisconsin Whitewater
Kash Graham	Grambling State University
LeSarah Fortson	University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Lilibeth Gonzalez	Mount Mary College
Mercedes Kelly	University of Wisconsin Richland
Nafeesa Nash	Ashford University
Shanera Hopkins	University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Sydney Petty	Marshall Town Community College
Tacharra Edwards	Carroll University
Tericka Thorn	University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Tristiana Walls	MATC

*\*Learned about this college while on the college tour*



# Self Reflection

In order to fully process the events of the tour, Program Coordinators lead girls in various reflection activities, including daily writing in a journal. The journal highlighted girls' personal experiences and impressions about the tour. Following are some powerful excerpts shared from the girls' journals that illustrate the power of the College Tour.

*Something that inspired me while on tour was our visit to Colonial Williamsburg. I was inspired to become more familiar with my country's history.*  
–Akilah, 8th Grade

*I learned that I want a college with small class sizes so the teacher will know me, making it easier to ask for help.*  
–Niesha, 8th Grade

*The trip made me realize that whatever I believe in I can achieve.*  
–Cathy, 8th Grade

*One thing I plan to change is my attitude...because I know attitude is everything. A bad attitude will get me nowhere.*  
–Marshanette, 9th Grade

*Being in PEARLS and on this tour has made me notice who I want to become. It has made me believe that I can do anything I put my mind to. It has also made me gain more confidence in myself, which I really do take pride in.*  
–Kourtlyn, 9th Grade

*When I first started PEARLS I was shy and not outgoing. PEARLS has taught me how to respect myself and others.*  
–Ashantia, 7th Grade

*The college tour changed my whole attitude. I will go to school every day and do my best on my work. I plan to focus on what really matters and not just on friends.*  
–Kaylah, 9th Grade



*The result of this trip made me think about the future more. It made me think about college...I never thought about college before going on this trip.*  
—Julissa, 8th Grade

*I've realized that I have to start focusing more on myself. I will stop trying to let others bring me down, and keep me down, when I know I can do better.*  
—Ke'Adre, 8th Grade

*I CAN get into an excellent college if I work hard, learn, and study. PEARLS allows me to step outside my house and still have somebody care about me—like a big sister.*  
—Tamyra, 8th Grade

*This college tour has changed my life because I usually don't get as close with people in one week like I did with the other girls on tour. I'm more open now.*  
—Aciana, 11th Grade

*I will work harder in school, help out in the community more, and I will take every opportunity there is to help me get into a good college.*  
—Emily, 7th Grade

*College tour changed my perception of the world because now I know I have a bright future and I can make it to college and be successful if I just strive for it. I won't let anything stop me from achieving my goal.*  
—Alexis, 9th Grade

*PEARLS' college tour helped me to realize the world is not always filled with negativity. There are a lot of places and people who are positive and helpful... When I saw a PEARLS alum on campus, it made me believe that anything is possible for me.*  
—Shantee, 9th Grade



# 2011 Scholarship Awardees

To demonstrate its commitment to the girls' ongoing success, PEARLS' Board of Directors established the **PEARLS Colleen Fitzgerald Scholarship Fund** in 2006. PEARLS seniors who are accepted to a two or four year technical school or college are invited to apply. Criteria for scholarships include commitment to PEARLS and its mission, community service, academic achievement and leadership. In June 2011, PEARLS presented seven scholarships worth a total of \$8,250 to these impressive young women:



### **Ms. Charmaine Clark - \$1,975 scholarship**

Ms. Clark is a graduate of Believers in Christ High School where she ranked number one in her class. Charmaine will attend Alverno College in the fall and will pursue Biology with hopes of someday becoming an OB/GYN. Charmaine served as a PEARLS Teen Facilitator and believes that, *"Working for PEARLS has allowed me to see and care for others more than I ever thought I could."*



### **Ms. Lilibeth Gonzalez - \$1,975 scholarship**

Ms. Gonzalez is a graduate of CEO Leadership Academy and is an active community volunteer. She also spent many hours tutoring elementary and middle school students. Lilibeth is anticipating majoring in Psychology at Mount Mary College in the fall. When reflecting on her time with PEARLS, Lilibeth says, *"PEARLS has not only helped me be a more responsible person academically, but also personally."*



### **Ms. Breona Love - \$1,000 scholarship**

Ms. Love is a graduate of CEO Leadership Academy and plans to attend Wisconsin Lutheran College in the fall. Her focus, while in college, will be in Psychology and Business Management. She plans to one day be a therapist as well as own a Hair Salon. Breona believes strongly in the PEARLS mission and says, *"PEARLS for Teen Girls has had a great impact on my life because it has shown me the importance of sisterhood relationships and how we can learn and grow together."*



**Ms. Ebony McGhee - \$1,000 scholarship**

Ms. McGhee is a graduate of Rufus King International High School. With plans of someday becoming a Defense Attorney, Ebony plans to attend Howard University while majoring in Criminal Justice in the fall. Ebony plans to continue to be an inspiration because of her PEARLS experience. *"Before I committed myself to be a PEARLS girl, I really didn't have an identity... throughout my four years as a PEARLS participant, I have grown in a very beautiful, courageous, and outgoing young woman."*



**Ms. Tericka Thorn - \$1,000 scholarship**

Ms. Thorn is a graduate of CEO Leadership Academy. She plans to study Psychology at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh in the fall. She wants to be active on campus and in her community as a volunteer and has a special interest in tutoring young children. *"My participation in PEARLS has helped me to express my personal feelings on various topics and societal issues."*



**Ms. Daria Gainey - \$800 scholarship**

Ms. Gainey is a graduate of CEO Leadership Academy. Daria intends to study nursing and radiology while at York University. The reason she gives for her field of study is the she "loves helping people." Daria says, *"PEARLS helped me realize my self worth and taught me that I am like a pearl because I am pure, I have been spiritually transformed, and I am able to accept myself for who I am. True beauty comes from inside."*



**Ms. Nafeesa Nash - \$500 scholarship**

Ms. Nash is a graduate of CEO Leadership Academy. Her love of science and health leads her to major in Biochemistry at Ashford University this fall. She has great interest in the human body and how it works. As she reflects on her time in PEARLS she says, *"PEARLS helped me become more open to social issues that are in my community and around the world."*

# Donors

## Thank You College Tour and Annual Campaign Donors!

The PEARLS College Tour is made possible through fundraising activities organized and operated by the girls who attend the tour along with generous contributions from individuals and corporations who care about supporting the next generation of great women leaders in Milwaukee. Each girl is responsible for raising or contributing \$450 toward the trip. In the spring of 2011 PEARLS girls participated in fundraising activities to support the tour, including selling Boston Store coupons, pocket peelers, candy, and participating in fundraisers at Culvers and Pick n Save. The girls also organized a bowl-a-thon and car wash to collect donations.

We are EXTREMELY grateful to the following donors who made contributions to PEARLS from August 2010 through July 2011. Thank you for supporting the success of all PEARLS participants.

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