

Our West End Newsletter



Who are these neighbors? See "On the Cover"; page 2

Issue 11

February, 2007

"Creating a Vibrant Community"

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by Local Youth
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For
Teen Girls
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A personal story of violence, and healing, in West End

Viva Meu Deus (Alive My God)

By Paulette Richards

"You think I'm playing with you?" *Exci* [see sidebar below] cocked his gun and shoved the barrel against my hip.

"Where's the money?" he drawled around the cigarette poked characteristically in the corner of his mouth.



"Give me the keys. I'll open it for you."

He turned to his partner and handed him the gun. Then his partner turned his back to me. The gun was no longer pointed in my direction, but I was building up to a full fit of hysterics. As soon

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What's Happening at the John H. Harland Boys & Girls Club?

HOTGIRLS, Inc. Launches Program for Teen Girls

By Carla Stokes, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Helping Our Teen Girls In Real Life Situations, Inc. (HOTGIRLS) announces the launch of the FIREGRL Club at the Intel® Computer Clubhouse at the John H. Harland Boys & Girls Club. This unique program trains teen girls (ages 13-18) in health education, activism, technology, and media literacy and production. HOTGIRLS is a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health and lives of young Black women and girls. The organization trains young women and girls to design and implement social change projects that tackle the health issues and real-life situations they face in their lives and communities. The FIREGRL Club program builds upon groundbreaking research conducted by HOTGIRLS founder Dr. Carla Stokes on Black girls' use of the Web and hip hop as tools for self-expression.

Members of the HOTGIRLS Girls' Advisory Board began educating girls at the Harland Boys & Girls Club about street harassment

and the importance of developing a positive self-image in October. The girls are currently recording educational rap and R&B songs and developing innovative materials for a campaign to raise awareness about street harassment. The HOTGIRLS approach is powerful because it helps girls navigate the contradictory messages they receive about Black girlhood. Participants are empowered to resist denigrating representations of women and girls by creating their own media and self-representations.



HOTGIRLS Girls' Advisory Board members pose for a picture in the recording studio at the Computer Clubhouse

In March, the HOTGIRLS Girls' Advisory Board will partner with Atlanta University Center students participating in the HOTGIRLS Young Women's Leadership Council to organize a summit for local teen girls about the impact of HIV/AIDS on Black women and girls in the Atlanta area. After the summit, FIREGRL Club

participants will work with HOTGIRLS, HIV/AIDS experts, and mentors from local colleges to create an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign targeting young women and girls residing in the local community. FIREGRL Club participants will also learn about media production while developing educational content for FIREGRL.com, a web site for Black teen girls sponsored by HOTGIRLS. The girls will learn how to create digital artwork, produce their own music, and design Web sites in a fun, girl-friendly atmosphere.

The FIREGRL Club will begin a new cycle in March. Applications will be available in January/February. To learn more about the program, please visit the HOTGIRLS web site (www.helpingourteengirls.org) or contact Nikki Abdul-Mateen, Director of the Computer Clubhouse at (404)758-2892.

Dr. Carla Stokes - researcher, health educator, consultant, and Executive Director of HOTGIRLS, Inc. - began mentoring youth in West End while attending Spelman College.

