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# Amigos 805

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## A teaching moment

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## Local teens travel to D.C. to tour sights, talk politics

**Girls Inc. of Carpinteria members visit with local representatives, discuss youth mentoring grants, STEM legislation, immigration and other pressing issues**

By Frank X. Moraga / Amigos805

After a long week of meeting with congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., discussing issues such as STEM education, immigration and youth mentoring grants, and touring historic museums and monuments, Victoria Juarez said her group was ready to head back home to California. While they will miss the sights and sounds of the nation's bustling capital, they are leaving happy to know that their voices were heard.

"They had an opportunity to use their voice and get their support," she said. "They are exhausted, but sad to be leaving."

No, they weren't lobbyists in the traditional sense. But this group of more than a dozen local youth women certainly had an impact.

"Meeting with Congresswoman Lois Capps has been one of my favorite moments of the trip so far," Yulisa Rosales stated in the group's media release. "She made me feel like I have a say in the world and have a chance to do something in life."

Rosales is one of a group of 14 local teens from Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's Eureka! Program. Girls Inc. is a nonprofit organization that seeks to inspire youth to achieve their dreams.

They arrived in D.C. on July 27 and spent a jammed-packed workweek with their California representatives and senators, exploring a renowned university and learning about technology first-hand by visiting a couple of the leading companies in the industry.

Juarez, the organization's executive director, spoke with Amigos805 just as she and the youths were about to board the return flight on July 31.

"Just to be in Washington, D.C., tour the monuments, spend time on Capitol Hill with Lois Capps, meeting briefly with Sen. Barbara Boxer and talking with Sen. Dianne Feinstein," it was a great eye-opening experience for them, Juarez said. The young women agreed.

"We are here to pave the way for other girls," Maria Zamora stated in the release. "Through our actions, we can show girls that they can accomplish anything and only through active participation in the democratic process can we make change."

"I have been in D.C. visiting every important place in the nation's capital. The people that work here have the power to change things. Being here



Courtesy photos

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's Eureka! members take a moment out of their busy schedule to take a group photo in front of the Capitol Building in Washington D.C.

means a lot to me because all my life I have only seen these places in pictures and it is sooo crazy to think that right now I am standing in front of the U.S. Capitol," wrote Rosales on the group's blog at <http://girlsinc-carp.org/category/blog/>. "I was really inspired by our local congresswoman. Lois Capps went from being a nurse to being the representative for the 24th district and she never ever thought that she would. This makes me think that maybe even one of us could do that too. She made me feel like I have a say in the world and have a chance to do something in life... She really inspired me."

Besides meeting with elected officials, the youth had the opportunity to explore the campus of George Washington University, providing them with a broader view of their educational options.

"The campus is not at all like UCSB. It is instead spread out over 12 city blocks and part of the city," wrote one of the students on the blog. "During our tour of the engineering department, we learned that females make up 40 percent of the students in the department (an impressive number). As the guide showed us the classrooms and labs, we learned more about some of their projects. Groups of students were testing robots to assist the U.S. military in exploring dangerous environments abroad and detect when an elderly person had fallen."

The youth also toured Google's and Microsoft's D.C. offices where they participating in coding activities.

Finally, they had the chance to be regular tourists, visiting the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and the Air & Space Museum — one of the world's most visited museums — and touring monuments and sites such

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Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's Eureka! members sit with Rep. Lois Capps to discuss how youth mentoring could benefit Girls Inc.'s Juvenile Justice Program.

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as Capitol Building and the Holocaust Museum.

"Our evening concluded with a two-hour night-time trolley tour of the most famous historical monuments in our country," the students wrote on the blog .... Some of the monuments that we visited included the Washington Monument, the Abraham Lincoln Memorial, Iwo Jima, the Vietnam Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. The two that resonated with many of us were the Vietnam Memorial and the Arlington National Cemetery because they are just a reminder of all the people who have fought to protect our country and those who sacrificed their lives so that we can be free. We are all feeling lots of gratitude tonight."

The youth said they definitely experienced their eureka moment on the trip.

"I am so honored to be traveling to Washington D.C. with Girls Inc. of Carpinteria. There is so much history and being given the opportunity to experience it first hand is really exciting," wrote Ana Delgado. "My voice counts! This experience is going to be transformative and I am glad to be sharing it with my Eureka! friends."

The girls, who will be entering their junior year of high school, are members of the organization's Eureka! program, a five-year, college-bound program that aims to break gender stereotypes by encouraging girls to discover and explore different career paths and fields. Eureka! also includes fitness, nutrition and personal development activities that encourage girls to be healthy, strong and self-confident, the organization reported.

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria launched its five-year Eureka! program in 2012 to provide leadership and education opportunities for teen girls, beginning the summer before their eighth-grade year up through the end of high school. The girls travelling to Washington D.C. are part of the program's first cohort and will be entering their fourth year with Eureka!

Each year a new group of students join the program. A total of 71 participants have signed up with the program since 2012, Juarez said.

"Our programs are designed to expose girls at a young age to be strong, smart and bold female role models and (explore) diverse career paths, including government and policy-making, so they can begin envisioning their own paths to success and establishing life goals with the confidence that their goals can be achieved," Juarez stated in the release. "We're so proud to be developing the next generation of female leaders — and these girls are beyond excited to get out of their comfort zones and discover the city where world-changing decisions are made every day."

Visits to UCSB and externships have been part of the Eureka! members previous summer programs. In their final year the youth will be focused on getting everything ready for a successful first year of college.

The Washington D.C. visit certainly prepared them for the world of possibilities.

"For many of them this is their first time on a plane, first time on the Metro (transportation system)," Juarez said.

"LAX is massive! It really could be its own city. There were tons of people with places to go and people to see. What an experience," Zamora wrote about her experience. "As we boarded the plane I was not sure what to expect as I had never flown before. I asked my friends what it felt like to take off and some described it as a roller coaster (I agree). We encountered some turbulence but thankfully it was minimal. When the United Airlines crew found out it was my first flight they gave me a set of wings!"

Following the trip, participants will share their experiences with members of the city council and other local clubs.

### About Girls Inc. of Carpinteria

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria is a member of Girls Inc.®, a nonprofit. Girls Inc. is open to students of all backgrounds, specifically targeting first-generation college-bound students.

More than 600 students from Carpinteria and Ventura County have participated in the program.

With local roots dating to 1864 and national status since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls through research-based programs and public education efforts that empower girls to understand, value, and assert their rights, the organization reported. It provides programs for girls 6 to 18 years old that focus on science, math, and technology; health and sexuality; economic and financial literacy; sports skills; leadership and advocacy; and media literacy.

To learn more, become a volunteer or offer support, visit [www.girlsinc-carp.org](http://www.girlsinc-carp.org) or call 805-684-6364.



Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's Eureka! members, top photo, pose with U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer. Yulisa Rosales, left, and Maria Zamora, right, pose with U.S. Sen. Diane Feinstein. According to a posting in their blog, the youth had breakfast at the Hart Senate Office Building (donuts & Bagels) and then proceeded to Feinstein's office where they lobbied for her support of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Mentoring Grant. If passed, it would benefit 1,100 Girls Inc. members, including those in Carpinteria.