



of Carpinteria

NEWS

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Inspirational Women Take the Stage at Girls Inc. of Carpinteria Annual Luncheon

Erica Ford, founder of LIFE Camp and Peace is a Lifestyle, to serve as keynote speaker; Girls Inc. and Urban Yogis Host "Yoga on the Lawn" at SB Courthouse

CARPINTERIA, CA (March 9, 2017) – **Girls Inc. of Carpinteria** will host its annual "Women of Inspiration" luncheon on Monday, April 3, welcoming **Erica Ford**, CEO and founder of **LIFE Camp, Inc.**, who will serve as the keynote speaker.

Ford's motivation to make a change came from her upbringing in the high-crime neighborhood of Jamaica, Queens in the 1980s, where she grew up attending countless funerals for friends. Tragic violence in her community inspired Ford to create LIFE Camp (Love Ignites Freedom through Education), which provides at-risk inner-city youth (ages 13-24) the valuable tools they need to stay in school and out of the criminal justice system.

The foundation spawned Ford's Peace is a Lifestyle program, featuring holistic guru and acclaimed author **Deepak Chopra**, an outspoken supporter of her work, who makes monthly visits to LIFE Camp to talk to and meditate with the group participants. In partnership with Chopra and yoga teacher Eddie Stern, Ford created the **Urban Yogis** program, inspiring at-risk youth to choose alternative pathways toward positivity and peace. Ford and the Urban Yogis lead yoga in the NYC Public School system, in detention centers, and at the Baisley Park housing project in Queens.

"Each year our luncheon celebrates the achievements of women who are inspiring the next generation of girls to have a voice and to dream big," said **Victoria Juarez**, Executive Director of Girls Inc. of Carpinteria. "Erica Ford, our honorees, and Girls Inc. member Andrea, who will share her story at the luncheon, are each role models in their own right for all girls. We're proud to recognize these courageous women who embody our mission to teach girls they are valuable, powerful and deserving of every opportunity."

Ford's dedication to reducing violence among young New Yorkers has garnered countless awards, accolades, praise and recognition by notable public figures such as former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Reverend Al Sharpton, and hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons. With 30 years of championing for today's youth under her belt, Ford shows no signs of stopping: she has developed a citywide coalition and campaign to reduce gun violence and is the woman behind NY Peace Week, organized through LIFE Camp, Inc.

"I admire organizations like Girls Inc. that nurture the greatness in young women and girls," said Ford. "I am honored to play a part in helping garnish support for Girls Inc.'s mission and sharing the vision at the annual Women of Inspiration luncheon. Together we can all make Peace a Lifestyle."

The Women of Inspiration luncheon will also recognize three honorees with deep roots in community involvement and service, who have proven to be outstanding role models for young women: **Nini Seaman**, a parent volunteer, local artist, and dedicated Girls Inc. supporter and former board member; **Asa Olssen**, a local actress who spent 17 years building a unique drama program and performance

center at Girls Inc. of Carpinteria; and **Mericos Foundation**, a supporter of Girls Inc.'s Eureka Program.

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria participant **Andrea Saldana**, a 17-year-old student at Carpinteria High School, will emcee the luncheon and present the Women of Inspiration awards to this year's honorees.

The fundraiser luncheon is co-chaired by **Nancy Koppelman** and **Amanda Kastelic**.

Women of Inspiration will take place on Monday, April 3 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Girls Inc. campus, 5315 Foothill Road in Carpinteria. Tickets are \$100 and all proceeds will support Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's mission to inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria will host "Yoga on Lawn," a free-to-the-community yoga session led by Erica Ford and the Urban Yogis **Juquille Johnston** and **Raheem Lewis**, on Tuesday, April 4 at 4:15 p.m. at the Santa Barbara Courthouse, Sunken Gardens Lawn. The event features **Robbie Nova** and **DJ Magneto** and is open to all ages.

For more information about Women of Inspiration or Yoga on the Lawn, or to purchase tickets to the luncheon, please call (805) 684-6364, email vjuarez@girlsinc-carp.org or visit girlsinc-carp.org.

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria is a member of Girls Incorporated®, a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. 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. We provide 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, please visit www.girlsinc-carp.org/.

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