

 **USA TODAY** | BEST BUYS FOR EVERY BACKPACK

BACK *to* SCHOOL

FALL 2017



**AYESHA
CURRY**

**Mom, wife,
chef & author**

55 SMART
FASHIONS

+

CREATIVE, COOL
STEM TOYS

+

GIRL
POWER!

DISPLAY UNTIL SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

\$5.99 US / \$6.99 CAN



@usatodaymags



FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



Lisa A. Beach is an Orlando-based journalist and copywriter who writes about family, food, wellness and other lifestyle topics for publications such as *Parents*, USA TODAY's *Pet Guide* and *Edible Orlando*. With a long history of volunteering (most recently with Orlando's Edible Education Experience), Beach loves shining the spotlight on nonprofit groups and the amazing work they do, particularly those that help young girls excel (**page 60**). "I was so impressed by the girl empowerment organizations I profiled for this piece, opening minds — and doors — for young girls."



Gina Roberts-Grey has interviewed hundreds of actors, athletes and politicians, and her work has appeared in numerous print and online outlets including *Family Circle*, *Glamour*, *Essence*, *Live Happy* and *Bicycling*. She shares a joy of cooking for loved ones with Ayesha Curry, whom she talked with for our cover story (**page 40**). Roberts-Grey, her husband and their college-age son still prepare and share family meals in their Syracuse, N.Y., home when everyone is under one roof. "There's nothing like time together in the kitchen to bond and create memories!"



Christine Romero spent a decade as a business newspaper reporter and has since worked in communications. The award-winning business writer's work has been published across numerous platforms including Realtor.com, USA TODAY's *Hispanic Living* and University of Colorado publications. The Denver-based writer has always had an interest in issues of equity and inclusion, and that prompted her to look at how gender and intersectional issues are incorporated into the classroom (**page 46**). "I think it's fair to say that all of us have seen the ups and downs in our country in the last year," she says. "After hearing from teachers and students, like 10-year-old Liz Ondoma, I truly felt inspired knowing this is our future."



Adam Stone's coverage of education, technology and government has appeared in a range of national publications including *Converge*, *Government Technology* and *C4ISRNet*. He follows tech trends in the public sector and writes frequently on emerging technology in military and government circles. A passionate proponent of public school funding, he also serves on the board of Aleph Bet Jewish Day School in Annapolis, Md., where his kids have attended both private and public schools. "In my research into digital learning, (**page 78**) I was excited to see the breadth of creative ideas on the table," he says. "The real question is whether this society values education enough to chase down these opportunities. It comes down to money."



PREMIUM PUBLICATION

EDITORIAL

DIRECTOR

Jeanette Barrett-Stokes
jbstokes@usatoday.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Jerald Council
jcouncil@usatoday.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Michelle Washington
mjwashington@usatoday.com

EDITORS

Tracy Scott Forson
Patricia Kime
Elizabeth Neus
Sara Schwartz
Debbie Williams

ISSUE DESIGNER

Miranda Pellicano

DESIGNERS

Gina Toole Saunders
Lisa M. Zilka

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Matt Alderton, Lisa A. Beach, Vanessa Caceres, Claudia M. Caruana, Hollie Deese, Valerie Finholm, Gina Roberts-Grey, Quinn Kelley, Christine Romero, Adam Stone, Kristi Valentini, Suzanne Wright

ADVERTISING

VP, ADVERTISING

Patrick Burke | (703) 854-5914
pburke@usatoday.com

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR

Justine Madden | (703) 854-5444
jmadden@usatoday.com

FINANCE

BILLING COORDINATOR

Julie Marco

This is a product of

STUDIO
GANNETT

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or reproduced in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the written consent of USA TODAY.

The editors and publisher are not responsible for any unsolicited materials.

PRINTED IN THE USA



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER: @USATODAYMAGS

Girl Power!

Programs help put young females on a path to success

BY LISA A. BEACH

When 9-year-old Jelani Jones discovered a passion for creating natural bath products, she decided to launch her own business — Lani Boo Bath — in October 2016. But when she needed help creating a more structured approach to grow her business, Jelani turned to SheEO, a Springfield, Va.-based mentoring and enrichment company that provides entrepreneurial training.

SheEO joins a growing number of “girl empowerment” organizations that share a common goal: to help

young girls realize their dreams.

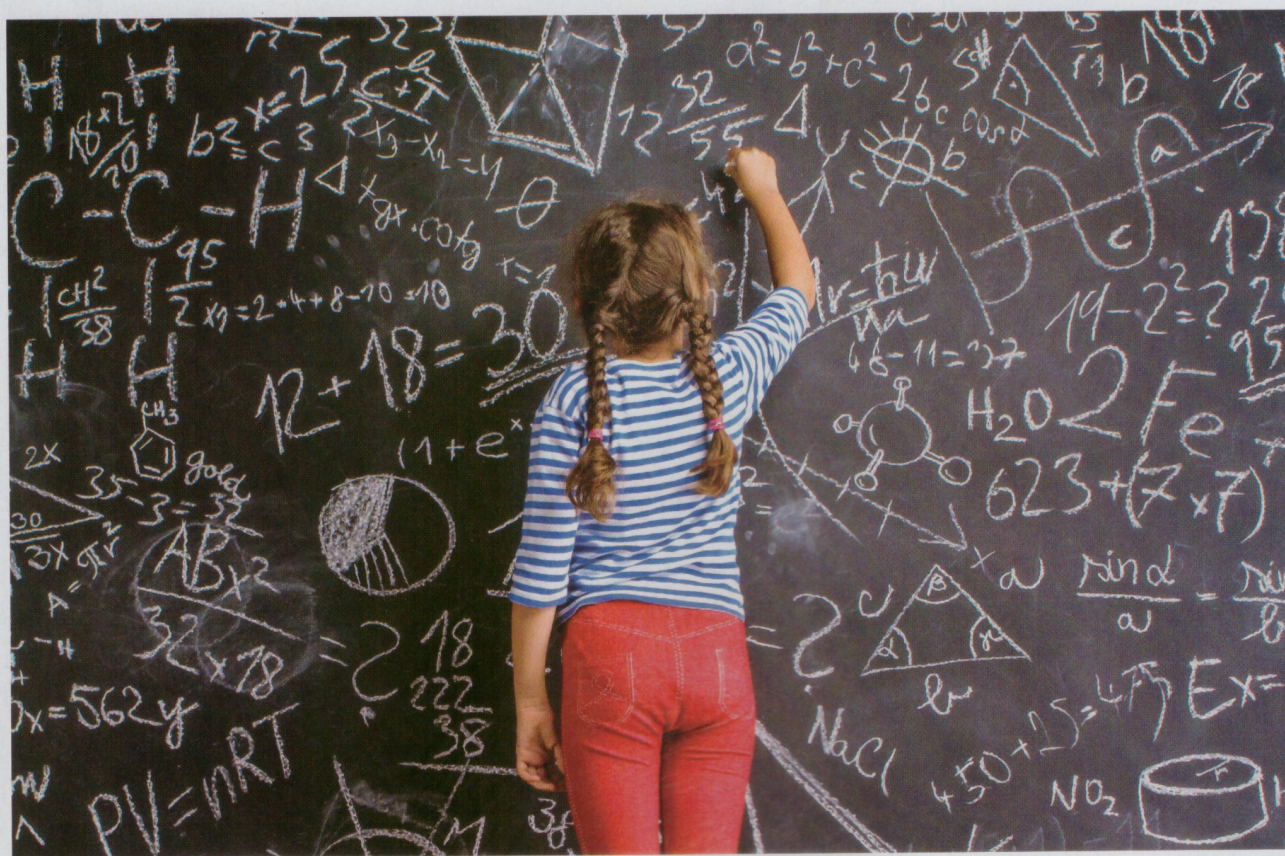
“We work to empower the CEO in every girl to take steps towards business ownership and community leadership,” explains DeShawn Robinson-Chew, the group’s CEO and founder. “Our hands-on, immersion program helps young ladies be a ‘she’ while becoming an ‘EO’ (executive officer). We foster both personal and professional development.”

Founded in 2003, SheEO partners with schools, churches and youth centers to encourage budding entrepreneurs ages

8-16 through summer camps, classes, after-school clubs and individual coaching. With guidance from SheEO professionals, entrepreneurs-in-training plan and pitch business ideas, set goals, strategize and connect with like-minded peers.

While some girls need help on their path to entrepreneurship, others just need a helping hand.

When she was 11, Diamond Jones was living in extreme hardship in Chattanooga, Tenn. Her mom was ill, her dad was in jail and she was homeless. She turned





to her local Girls Inc. organization for much-needed support and guidance as she overcame her struggles. Now 18, she recently graduated high school with a 3.8 GPA and is the first in her family to go to college; she will attend the University of Memphis in the fall.

Headquartered in New York, Girls Inc. taps into its network of more than 1,200 sites across the U.S. and Canada to serve 140,000 girls ages 6-18 each year. Its overarching purpose? To inspire girls to be strong, smart and bold by providing direct assistance and advocacy.

"We are on the prevention side," says Judy Vredenburg, Girls Inc. president and CEO. "We create strong, long-lasting mentorship between girls and our professionals done in a sisterhood of support."

To accomplish this, Girls Inc. offers programs covering media literacy, healthy relationships, sports and initiatives like Operation SMART, which focuses on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Another nonprofit, Girls Who Code, takes the STEM-focused approach even further. It strives to build the largest pipeline of future female engineers in the U.S. by providing free after-school clubs and summer immersion camps to girls wanting to learn computer programming. Since 2012, the organization has grown from serving 20 girls in New York to 40,000 in 50 states.

"In both our summer immersion program and our clubs, girls work on a final project using technology to solve an issue that matters to them. That personal relevancy is crucial in sparking and sustaining girls' interest in the field," says founder and CEO Reshma Saujani.

As today's girls battle gender-specific stereotypes and biases, they can lean on girl empowerment organizations along the way.

"We need to start challenging our girls to step outside of their comfort zone, to push girls to be brave and reward them for trying," Saujani says. ■

Girls work together to examine properties of soil as part of an activity at the Girls Inc. program in Lynn, Mass.

GIRL-FOCUSED GROUPS

GIRLS INC.

Equips girls ages 6-18 to navigate gender, economic and social barriers with programs that focus on education (particularly science, technology, engineering and math); mental and physical health; money management; media literacy; and social issues. girlsinc.org

and professional development. girlswritenow.org

SHEEO

Encourages girls ages 8-15 to become entrepreneurs and business leaders through mentoring, classes, after-school clubs and other enrichment and career exploration activities. BEaSheEO.com

GIRLS WHO CODE

Aims to close the gender gap in technology by providing hands-on opportunities to girls in grades six through 12 who want to learn coding through free after-school clubs and summer immersion camps. girlswhocode.com

SHE'S THE FIRST

Helps educate girls in low-income areas globally by providing mentoring, global awareness of educational access and affordability, and scholarships to girls who will be the first in their families to graduate high school. shethfirst.org

GIRLS WRITE NOW

Matches girls in grades nine through 12 from New York's underserved neighborhoods with professional women writers, providing mentoring, writing and technology workshops and opportunities for leadership, college prep

STEP UP

Encourages professional women to inspire girls ages 13-18 in underserved neighborhoods to succeed through mentorship programs, encouraging them to graduate high school confident, college-bound and career-focused. suwn.org