

Creative 360 Seeks Women as Mentors for Facing Forward

What: 20 eighth-grade girls from Central Middle School need mentors Feb. 1–March 25

Where: Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) at 1517 Bayliss in Midland

For more information: Call Facing Forward Program Director Stephanie Cirihal at (989) 631-2444; e-mail her at scirihal@hotmail.com; or visit www.bcreative360.org/outreach.htm.

Midland -- Creative 360 has served 70 teen girls in **Facing Forward: Journey into Womanhood**, since 2007. The next session begins February 1 in Midland, with eighth-graders from Central Middle School. Ten girls will attend a Monday/Wednesday series, and ten others will attend Tuesday/Thursday. The meetings begin right after school, from 3 – 4.30 pm each day. The eight-week program concludes just before spring break, and no sessions are held on no-school days.

The place, the materials, the planning, and the girls are ready to go. *The only missing ingredient is 14 more adult women to serve as mentors.* The time commitment is 24 hours over an 8-week period. No prior experience of mentoring or art classes is needed. All information is made available during the program, as the women and girls learn together. Orientation for mentors is provided before the first meeting with the students.

Past mentor Jackie Light of Midland is a member of the Junior League of Saginaw Valley, which has provided three years of financial support for the program. Light is the former Chair of the Junior League's Facing Forward Advisory Committee, which works with Creative 360 staff to strengthen the program based on data and experience. Light has served as a mentor during two different sessions. She says, "Facing Forward is unlike any other mentoring program I have ever participated in. Although I was hesitant about my lack of arts experience at first, I quickly found that the bond forged with my mentee overshadowed any doubts I had. We were having fun together, and that's all that mattered." Past mentor Kelly Nori of Bay City, also a Junior League member, says, "I volunteered for the program with the goal of helping a young woman build confidence, strength and self-awareness, but unexpectedly in the end I was more confident, stronger and self-aware because of the experiences our group shared together."

Local data from pre- and post-program surveys indicate that Facing Forward facilitates positive change in the lives of participants. Facing Forward addresses about half of the 40 Developmental Assets of Adolescence identified by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, including both external and internal assets (details of this list of assets can

be viewed at <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>). Not only the girls, but also the adult mentors report positive developments as a result of their involvement. Community strengthening is another positive outcome of Facing Forward, as it fosters inter-generational relationships between individuals who might otherwise never have met. Program evaluation has been provided by The Legacy Center for Student Success in Midland. Data from 2007-2009 indicate that 85% of students would recommend the program to a friend and 70% percent state that Facing Forward had a positive impact on their lives.

Stephanie Cirihal, Facing Forward Program Director since 2008, has facilitated group activities in the arts and creative movement for over ten years. She is a Certified Personal Coach, certified in Crucial Conversations Mastery, and a Certified Six Sigma Black Belt in innovation and problem-solving. During her previous employment by The Dow Chemical Company as a chemical engineer she gained international work experience; and most recently became a Certified White Belt Instructor of the Nia technique, a fitness practice incorporating elements of the martial arts, modern dance, and yoga. Stephanie says that she is passionate about re-awakening the joy of movement and creativity in her students through teaching this intelligent approach to fitness. Her joyful and enquiring temperament, and her non-judgmental acceptance of people, make her is a natural to lead others on their paths of self-discovery, including emergence from states of dissatisfaction and powerlessness.

About Creative 360

Creative 360, formerly known as Creative Spirit Center, is a not-for-profit community arts and wellness organization founded in 1994. The Center's mission is to create an environment for people of all ages to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, art exhibits, events, concerts, speakers and outreach programs; and its goal is to enhance the development of physical, mental and spiritual wellness through the arts and humanities. Visit www.becreative360.org for more information about the winter roster at Creative 360, or call (989) 837-1885 to request a mailed copy.

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