# EVERY GIRL IS A CEO
POLISHED PEBBLES HELPS GIRLS BECOME GREAT COMMUNICATORS

AT HOME, SCHOOL AND IN THE FUTURE WORKPLACE.

LEARN MORE

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As we are entering our twelfth year, I’m excited to usher in new milestones for the Polished Pebbles Girls Mentoring Program. In twelve years, we’ve built our program from a monthly Saturday session on the southeast side of Chicago with only two girls at our first meeting. Today we’ve grown into a well-respected, direct service organization of girls and young women in need of supportive programming and mentoring to assist in unleashing their innate greatness. Founded in 2009, Polished Pebbles combines school and community-based mentoring, social emotional skills training, and job-readiness and internship experiences to address Chicago’s “other” crisis of violence against Black and Latinx girls. The inspiration for the program began from observing young women I was working with in schools discussing the popularized celebrity abuse case between entertainers Chris Brown and Rihanna. I was so alarmed when I noticed that young women were internalizing negative media perceptions about black women and intimate partner violence. So, my response was to work with women in my network and hold a gathering of young and adult women to have a discussion on the topic and reflect on how similar issues manifest in the community. This first meeting, and the ones that followed, served as the basis for the creation of the Polished Pebbles program. Today, Polished Pebbles teaches girls and young women transferable skills that provide non-violent and non-aggressive means to respond positively to threats of violence, successfully resolve interpersonal conflict, overcome childhood trauma, and develop work readiness skills, which all allow girls to be less vulnerable to sexual violence and sex trafficking. This is done through partnerships with a wide variety of local corporations, more than 20 schools in Chicago and South-Suburban Chicagoland, and a network of more than 500 professional women to provide the social emotional training, career exposure and connections, and personal support to help girls of color in Chicago thrive and succeed in the face of serious challenges.

Over the past 12 years, the Polished Pebbles team has built Polished Pebbles into an internationally respected girls program that has engaged girls at more than 100 schools in the Chicago region, Indiana, Texas, and at Duke University. Polished Pebbles has hosted an international Every Girl is a CEO! Conference and hosted fellows from Africa through the US State Department who have gone home and initiated their own successful programs for girls. We’re excited to streamline our work into four powerful programs including our signature Core Mentoring Program found in many school and after-school programs, our Mommy & Me Program, Pink Hard Hats Initiative, and our Every Girl is A CEO career and success curriculum based on my latest book with the same title.

We continue to be grateful for all the support of volunteers and partners in making sure all of our girls are confident that the career paths of their dreams are within their possibilities, because they all have an inner CEO! Eternally grateful,
Kelly Fair
Founder | Executive Director
Polished Pebbles Girls Mentoring Program
Reflections Foundation
“This past spring our Polished Pebbles mentor led us in workshops on how important it is to properly represent ourselves via social media, and how to be job ready”

“Because of Polished Pebbles, I received personal leadership development training and exposure to workforce development training provided by leading businesses like Bloomingdales and ThoughtWorks”

Polished Pebbles seeks to eliminate the “hope gap” experienced by too many girls of color in Chicago. Our programming introduces a myriad of new worlds to girls who rarely leave their neighborhoods. We are training the future leadership of corporate America, the nonprofit sector, and the civic sector. We are helping girls who are far too often trapped in a cycle of poverty and the criminal justice system to discover that they are entrepreneurs, scientists, CEO’s, managers, and leaders.

Girls in Chicago, and similar urban environments, are facing seemingly insurmountable challenges on a daily basis. Poverty, crime, unemployment, school suspension, lack of access to supportive services, and other such structural barriers, are the harsh realities of the girls Polished Pebbles intends to reach.

In recent years, life in Chicago has become particularly troubling for youth in communities of color. Chicago has recently faced with the closing of a number of community mental health centers primarily on the South side of the city. Chicago also leads in comparison to other major U.S. cities (NY, LA) with the highest percentage of Black youth aged 16-19 out of school and work. Often, girls growing up in low-income, segregated areas in the city must deal with gun violence, trauma, sexual and physical abuse, and lack of social supports. Young girls are most commonly arrested for truancy, running away, and substance use and abuse, all of which are manifestations of trauma. The Average Chronic Truancy Rate across Polished Pebbles’ school sites (in 2019 and part of 2020) was over 30% – an early indicator for incarceration and sex trafficking outcomes.

How do our youth learn to succeed and thrive, not just survive, in an environment with daily exposure to violence/crime, decreased access to education and supportive services, and few opportunities for employment?

Nationally, the statistics for Black youth are equally concerning as that of Chicago. In 2016 the congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls was formed with a mission to “eliminate significant barriers and disparities experienced by black women”. The formation of the Caucus is extremely significant as it makes the plight of Black women and girls a national priority. The 2015 White House Report on the Advancement of Women and Girls report sheds light on some of the disparities our girls face citing that girls from marginalized communities are suspended from school at disproportionate rates which puts them at higher risk for dropping out and are therefore more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system. “Black girls represent 14% of the U.S. population, yet they constitute 32% of the girls detained and committed.”

Girls are disproportionately arrested for status offenses and outstanding warrants, and are more likely to receive more severe punishment than boys.

The report also posits that Black children under 18 make up 59% of all arrest for prostitution, and Black and Latina girls are twice as likely as white girls to become pregnant and experience higher levels of unemployment. How do we support young girls who exist in a society where the odds are against them in ways that are direct and systemic? What tools are needed to navigate these realities?

The need for effective methods of positive engagement and support for girls in Chicago is urgent! Polished Pebbles is committed to answering the call...

“Because of Polished Pebbles, I received personal leadership development training and exposure to workforce development training provided by leading businesses like Bloomingdales and ThoughtWorks”

“The Bloomingdales mock interview was a truly incredible experience and helped me to develop stronger interviewing and professional skills”
"I learned how to be more confident"

MISSION STATEMENT

“Polished Pebbles helps girls become great communicators at home, school and in the future workplace.”

Innovation, passion and commitment are the driving forces behind the birth of the Polished Pebbles approach to mentorship for young girls in urban communities. It is our belief that there is a direct link between communication skills and college-career readiness, which leads to informed, active community leaders. As our founding team developed our programming, we considered creative ways to affect change within our girls. We were thoughtful in our desire to not only provide our girls with a positive outlet now, but to equip them with tools for success in important aspects of their life for years to come.

Research supports our belief that mentorship, communication and career preparation are essential to positive youth development, particularly for girls in Chicago and other urban environments. According to Youth.Gov, mentorship can help youth develop leadership skills and confidence in their abilities, increase civic engagement and ultimately prepare youth for the workforce. Mentorship can also lead to lower dropout, increased high school graduation rates, enhanced self-esteem, improve interpersonal skills and higher educational aspirations. Successful mentorship programs are noted to be flexible with the dynamic needs of mentors and mentees.

A report on the study of communication in college states “competence in oral communication – in speaking and listening – is prerequisite to students’ academic, personal, and professional success in life”. Communication is taught and can improve critical thinking skills and in turn supports youth in being more critical consumers of “modern media” forms. This is particularly important given the saturation of the internet and social media for today’s youth. Communication is key for conflict resolution and appropriate social engagement. And “antisocial and violent behavior often accompany or occur with underdeveloped social and conflict management skills”.

For Polished Pebbles, communication is the way!
“I learned that there are different ways of communicating and that violence is not the answer to everything”

“I’ve learned] that you don’t need drama in your life and that you can solve problems without fighting”

THE POLISHED PEBBLES “3C” SUCCESS MODEL

Communication + Career Exploration + Community = Success

Polished Pebbles has a unique approach to mentorship that stems from our foundational pillars of the Three Cs: Communication, Career Exploration, Community. Our model of school-based mentorship can be implemented in diverse school settings serving tween and teen girls in 5-12th grades, and functions as an After-School Program. The Polished Pebbles model is also designed to offer community-based group mentorship on Saturdays to girls in underserved communities.

THE POLISHED PEBBLES SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH

LOCAL GIRLS > COMMUNITY MENTOR > JOB SHADOWING

POLISHED PEBBLES ENGAGES...

1. Tween and teen girls (grades 5-12) from local schools and in the community
   - 80 to 90% African American and Latinx girls
   - Primarily low-income communities (70 to 90%)
   - In 10 Chicago neighborhoods and 3 S. Suburban Chicago districts
2. Volunteers from the community to serve as mentors
3. Corporations to offer on-site job shadowing for career readiness

TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION...

That ALL girls in underserved communities will have the communication skills necessary to confidently navigate challenging environments and be community leaders.

WE PROVIDE FOUR KEY PROGRAM OFFERINGS:

• Core Mentoring Program: Signature 20-25 week in-school and after-school mentoring initiative that increases the communication skills and employability of young women for the future workplace through mentoring, social and emotional learning, and career exposure. Designed to meet the unique needs of girls of color and give them the tools and skills needed to stay in school, resolve conflict, take on leadership roles, and graduate.

• Every Girl is a CEO Career and Success Curriculum: Guides girls on how to get their first job, how to find a mentor, and how to design a dream career, with examples from the lives and experiences of successful women leaders. Available to schools across the country and rapidly scalable, this curriculum serves as the model for Polished Pebbles’ summer work-study programming and for the job readiness components of our core Polished Pebbles mentoring program.

• Pink Hard Hats: Girls in Trades Initiative - Increases girls’ career exposure to a wide variety of career opportunities in the skilled trades and construction industries through skills training, mentoring, guest panels, job shadows, and work-study experiences while in elementary school through high school. We have hosted over 20 Pink Hard Hat career events and panels at our schools and will be continuing to offer Pink Hard Hat programming at each of our school sites in 2021.

• Mommy & Me Program: Provides yearlong programming to girls and their mothers, allowing them to bond while building career and entrepreneurship skills through career panels, masterclasses led by industry leaders, mentoring sessions, and a summer initiative. 15 mother-daughter teams participated in our 2020 Summer Entrepreneurship Program. We provided moms and daughters with tools and coaching to turn their small business idea into a viable plan and working business. Businesses created and launched include Beauty Glam Nails, Director’s Eye, Blushin Beauti, Mackie’s Lemonade, and Rose Bows & More.
ANSWERING THE CALL

Our ability to partner with schools, community-based institutions, corporations, and individual volunteers has been essential to our success as an organization. We also contract with professional workshop facilitators. We recognize the ways in which funding opportunities for nonprofits have changed with a call for collaboration and partnerships amongst stakeholders.

The challenges our girls face are complex and require a multifaceted response.

Polished Pebbles is intentional and strategic in our work to build effective, meaningful partnerships that help to expand our reach to more girls, and expose our girls to people, places, and experiences that support their growth and development.
MEET THE FOUNDER: Kelly Fair

Kelly Fair is the Founder and Executive Director of the Reflections Foundation and the Polished Pebbles Girls Mentoring Program, non-profit organizations that enhance the life skills, career readiness, and leadership ability of girls and young women. She is the author of They’re All the Same Girl and Every Girl is a CEO. Kelly is an award-winning social entrepreneur who advocates for girls, women, mentoring, and workforce pipelining.

Since launching Polished Pebbles in 2009 in Chicago, Kelly’s signature communications and job readiness programming has expanded from elementary age girls to include high schools, college programs, families, prominent women leaders, and to sites in Chicagoland, Northwest Indiana, Dallas, Texas, and North Carolina. The program, which started with two mentees, has now engaged more than 5,000 girls and 500 mentors across 100 different program sites, and has raised $2MM+ for partnering schools and communities.

Kelly’s work on behalf of girls and young women has earned recognition from Bank of America, ComEd, Verizon, Google, Duke University, Chicago Foundation for Women, DuSable Museum of African American History, Social Enterprise Alliance, and more. She has been featured by EBONY magazine, The Wall Street Journal, MSNBC, The Chicago Sun-Times, and Chicago Woman magazine. Kelly currently serves on the U.S. Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls Taskforce, the Harold Washington College President’s Advisory Board, and the Illinois Council for Women and Girls.

Kelly is a graduate of Howard University and the University of Iowa, with honors. She is a true “south side girl” and lives in Chicago’s Chatham neighborhood.
THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Since its inception, Polished Pebbles has made waves in the Chicago and national landscape of mentorship for underserved girls. Our approach to mentorship, with a focus on Communication, Career and Community was quickly accepted as a viable and effective intervention for girls. As a result, we’ve witnessed some wonderful successes with our girls, and the organization as a whole.

Addison Belhomme:
First joined the program at 9 years old and is now a 13-year old “young Black woman filmmaker on the rise.” Addison and her mom participated in the 2020 Mommy & Me Summer Entrepreneurship Program, which helped Addison develop her own film business, Director’s Eye.

Eriele:
Polished Pebbles Alumna, Fulbright Scholar, and Yale Law Student was a surprise guest during Kelly Fair and Polished Pebbles’ feature on The Kelly Clarkson Show in 2020. She surprised Kelly to thank her for her mentorship: “You are filling the opportunity gap in our community and across the nation. You are equipping young women with the ability to communicate and express themselves. Thank you for your continued support and hard work in advocating for young girls throughout the country.”

AFFILIATIONS:
• US Congressional Caucus for Black Women and Girls
• Illinois Council for Women and Girls, Coalition for Urban Girls
• US State Department Community Solutions Program Host
• Goldman and Sachs 10KSB
• Bank of America Global Ambassador

AWARDS:
• Essence Woman 2021
• National Impact Award, Duke University
• Gold Star Accredited Illinois Mentoring Program by MENTOR
• Chicago Foundation for Women Leadership Award
• Ariel Investments 40 Under 40
• ComEd Neighborhood Hero
• Verizon Everyday Hero

MEDIA COVERAGE:

IMPACT

“My experience with Polished Pebbles is one I will want to duplicate and grow for years to come. Having an organization like this that works with girls to prepare them with life skills was invaluable. The students from Polished Pebbles were more professional and poised then many other students. I was so impressed by the Polished Pebbles girls that I offered 15 of them summer internships. It takes a village to raise a child and the partnership between CPS and Polished Pebbles is a shining example of that!”

“Polished Pebbles has been an invaluable partner. The mentoring program has provided our scholars with knowledge and relationships built on mutual trust and respect. I am deeply grateful for the continued partnership and the value it adds to the lives of our scholars and the community.”

“ThoughtWorks provides activities that allow the girls to communicate amongst ThoughtWorkers and themselves. We stress teamwork and innovation in regard to technology and we strive to show the girls the vast amount of opportunities in technology”
CURRENT PARTNERS AND FUNDERS*

Current Partners:
- Wells Fargo
- Bank of America
- Bloomingdales
- Wintrust
- Hyde Park Bank
- Chicago Police Department
- Justice
- Ascension Retail
- Ann Taylor
- Dr. Gia Consulting
- Hayward Suggs.com
- ThoughtWorks
- Microsoft
- Hyatt
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Illinois
- The Academy Group
- Westside Justice Center
- The Chicago Tribune
- Nordstrom

Current Funders*
- MacArthur Foundation
- Cleveland Avenue Foundation
- University of Chicago
- The Chicago Community Foundation
- The Glasser and Rosenthal Family
- Bright Star Community Outreach
- Northern Trust
- Chicago Foundation for Women
- Polk Bros. Foundation
- MacArthur Foundation
- Mechanical Contractors Association
- Turner Construction
- Chris Curse & Company
- Milhouse Charities
- MSBARC
- Two Fish
- Truth B Told Media
- St. James Community
- The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education
- ComEd
- Evanston Technology Partners
- Sip & Savor
- United Airlines
- Coolio
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Illinois
- Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
- Grantmakers for Girls of Color
- Safe and Peaceful Communities
- Polk Bros. Foundations
- CIBC
- United Credit Union COVID Response
- Union Pacific

(*Over $5,000)