

# Positive Influence

*SHERI WEST  
& LIVEGIRL*

LIVEGIRL has influence at another level! Influence beyond consumer tastes and spending... LIVEGIRL has a positive influence on lives! ...Although billions of dollars in ad spending now flows through the new generation of social media influencers - and influencers now impact many billions more in consumer spending...it's worth noting that, at least thus far, consumerism is the overwhelming essence of most influencer marketing and commerce...and that there's real opportunity in the ever-expanding universe of influencers to achieve great gain and purpose for good and charitable causes.



Sheri West is a real life superhero. She's definitely the Mrs. Incredible (Elastiwoman) of New Canaan - only Sheri's superpower is stretching to run LiveGirl ('live' rhymes with 'give'), a most outstanding charity actively and successfully involved in empowering young women... and Sheri doesn't even need a superhero's uniform. She's a dynamo, who appears far too young, fit and energetic, to be the mother of three in high school and college, and to have started LiveGirl in 2014, after a two decade career, at Pepsi and then GE, in Corporate Finance and Leadership Development. Sheri uniquely combines passionate zeal with polished business acumen. She is the visionary leader of LiveGirl, an innovative nonprofit girls leadership organization. The scope and impact of the good work LiveGirl is doing is simply stunning!

LiveGirl is all about building confident, inclusive leaders. LiveGirl serves thousands of girls annually in its innovative, evidence-based leadership development and mentoring programs. Their free-of-charge after-school programs range from middle school Confidence Clubs, creating a safe space for girls at a crucial developmental stage in their lives, to She Works, a career-readiness and internship program for college-aged women. From pre-teen to young adult, LiveGirl equips young women with the skills, mentors, role models, and experiences necessary to thrive and gain social mobility. Remarkably, when schools closed in March 2020, LiveGirl moved all of its regular programs online and added new programs, such as She Cares 1:1, to provide mental health mentoring. Since its founding, LiveGirl has reached over 10,000 girls in grade 5 through college, including 65% girls of color.

Sheri explains, "Studies show us that girls' confidence plummets during puberty and never recovers. It is particularly difficult for girls of color, who are bombarded with negative messages on both race and gender. We get involved with the girls in middle school and stay with them through college. The girls relate to our mentors and begin to form a sisterhood. In middle school, we coach girls to lead themselves. In high school, we teach them how to lead others. And then we have She Works, where we match each young woman in a paid internship, and equip them to lead in the workforce. Building empathy is the key. We've seen that the direct involvement in our girls' lives that we offer really makes a difference long-term."

Currently, LiveGirl runs out of a small office on the back side of Walter Stewart's Market, with 3 full-time employees, 20+ diverse part-time mentors, a large network of interns and volunteers, and an annual budget that is funded from about 30% corporate sponsorships/grants and most of the remainder from private donations. The organizational structure, reach, implementation and effectiveness are all outstanding. And, while Sheri's MBA from Michigan State and all her professional experience are evident, it's simply astonishing that Sheri's been able to do what she's done with LiveGirl - and raise all the money to do it.



Lillah Saint Louis has been involved in LiveGirl through high school and launched her nonprofit Black Out Stamford through the LiveGirl League.



LiveGirl college intern Brianna Milano spreads positivity in the sisterhood.



Raise your hand if you're a confident, inclusive leader!

So, how does LiveGirl build confident, inclusive leaders? LiveGirl builds self-esteem by providing girls with a safe space to try new skills and experiences themselves. LiveGirl equips each girl with the tools to be self and socially aware and to discover the power of her voice. And LiveGirl provides opportunities for young women to build authentic bridges to people whose lives are different from their own. Post-program stats such as 86% "feel confident as a leader" and 91% "know how to deal with conflict" demonstrate impact. Saxe Middle School Counselor Sarah Beltran sees that impact. "Through LiveGirl, girls build self and social awareness and develop their ability to communicate, make sound decisions, and nurture positive relationships," Beltran said. "LiveGirl compliments our school-wide Social Emotional Learning initiatives beautifully." Neya Krishnan, a New Canaan High School senior, is a shining example of what young women can gain through LiveGirl. "LiveGirl taught me that anything and everything is possible," Krishnan said. "The specific leadership skills I learned - resilience, public speaking, advocacy, and networking - are the superpowers I need to rise."



# LIVEGIRL NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

Sheri bursts with pride when she talks about LiveGirl, or more particularly starts to tell the individual success stories of young women who have been deeply impacted by the program. But, like other superheroes, she's humble about her herculean contribution with LiveGirl, and prefers to boast about her family's role; her husband, Brian, sits on the LiveGirl Board; her daughter Olivia, a UPenn-bound senior at New Canaan High School, co-hosts the mother/daughter Confident Podcast and serves as President of the LiveGirl Leadership Council, and; her sons Conor, a Duke University sophomore, and Donovan, a Saxe Middle School eighth grader, have contributed in various other ways. She unassumingly explains the genesis, saying, "Our family agreed to pay it forward and do more after we hosted a student through the Fresh Air Fund. We witnessed the life-changing impact that access to positive support, mentors, and role models can have - and the awesome power to give Janiya the confidence that she 'belonged', and we probably learned as much about ourselves as she did about herself and us. I realized I wasn't doing enough and that we could all do more. I now define community beyond my zip code... and believe we can scale our innovative model to help end gender and racial inequality."