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Girls & Youth in Grades 6-12 Invited to Attend Spark Change Day

Strong Female Role Models & Advocacy Know-How On Tap March 25th at the Texas Capitol

AUSTIN, Texas – February 17, 2023 – [Spark Change Day](#) is a day-long, advocacy event for Texas youth in grades 6–12 to learn about how they can be more involved in their communities and how they can raise their voices to bring about positive change that benefits everyone. Jointly held by the Excellence & Advancement Foundation and the Girls Empowerment Network, this in-person event, will be held on Saturday, March 25, 2023, from 10am – 4pm at the Texas Capitol. Pre-registration is required and closes on March 15th.

Spark Change Day centers the experiences of teen girls of color and welcomes all youth to learn more about the power of advocacy with activities exploring issues youth are facing and the unique opportunity to hear from changemakers and advocates. Discussions about youth mental health, safe and supportive school environments, healthy relationships and equity will take center stage.

The event agenda includes

- seminars on the power of advocacy,
- small group sessions and activities exploring issues youth are facing,
- an impactful panel discussion with female changemakers, policy makers and advocates, and
- Advocacy Power Chats, small group discussions between youth and female adult relatable role models.

The event culminates with an impactful panel discussion moderated by Spark Change Leadership Team Members Adreayn Torrez and Eva Ackerman on **“The Power and Promise of Youth Advocacy: a Conversation with Female Changemakers.”** The panel includes women of color who have been successful seeking justice, equity and change in their communities. Confirmed panelists so far include the following:

- [Texas District 51 Representative Lulu Flores](#) - Rep. Flores is a longtime champion of equality and social justice. She rose through the grassroots ranks to serve as President and CEO of the National Women’s Political Caucus, the longest serving institution committed to increasing women’s participation throughout the political process. Likewise, Lulu’s leadership can be seen at all levels, from being elected a National Delegate for Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, to Chairing the Austin Arts Commission, to serving as Chief of Staff to the first Mexican American woman elected to the Texas House, Representative Irma Rangel.
- **Texas District 79 Representative Claudia Ordaz** – Rep. Ordaz was first elected to the Texas House in 2020 where she served on the Business & Industry and International Relations & Economic Development committees. She was named Freshman Legislator of the year by the Tejano Democrats for her work in fighting for voting rights. She was also recognized with the Legislative Star award for legislation that provides family leave benefits for state employees. Ordaz is the former Mayor Pro Tempore and City Councilwoman for the City of El Paso. Prior

Commented [AJ1]: We might want to ask Adreayn if we want to include the language “for Texas youth in grades 6-12” I know she mentioned in our conversation that she wanted to use youth instead of girls, however I can also see us using girls for the press release since it is most on brand.

Commented [AC2R1]: Youth

Commented [AJ3]: Would be want to add the registration deadline for urgency?

Commented [AC4R3]: The only drawback to adding this is if they decide to extend the deadline. I think there is sufficient urgency that the event is scheduled for the end of the month, but we can go either way. I was also thinking that we want media to publicize this all month long (not just these first two weeks)?? We can go either way depending what you and the team think.

Commented [AJ5]: We might need to double check that Eva is moderating this year again

Commented [AC6R5]: Agree. Also they might want a new "name" for their panel discussion. I highlighted it so we could make sure to check those details.

to working for El Paso, she served as a legislative staff and communications director in the Texas Senate and Press Secretary in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“Introducing girls and youth to positive role models who have succeeded and are succeeding against the odds can be an inspiration for future generations in so many ways,” says Adreayn Torrez, Girls Empowerment Network program manager. “Spark Change Day centers the experiences of girls and invites all youth to learn how to advocate for themselves and their communities. We aim to ignite each individual’s internal belief that they can be successful no matter what.”

Spark Change Day is part of the [Spark Change Project](#), a partnership between Girls Empowerment Network and the Excellence & Advancement Foundation. Together the two organizations launched this initiative now in its third year to center girls of color as leaders in advocacy, help them discover their activist voices and galvanize their peers to advocate for positive social change and social justice.

“By making it possible for girls of color to visit our state’s capitol and hear from inspiring role models they can look up to, we are inspiring youth to learn more about the power and promise of advocacy,” says Eva Ackerman, community programs coordinator, Excellence & Advancement Foundation. “We hope that girls and youth will use this event as a jumping off point to get more involved in their community, use their voices to create change, and explore career choices in public service, public policy and social justice.”

Girls and youth in grades 6 – 12 are invited to visit GirlsEmpowermentNetwork.org/scd to register to attend the event. After registration, attendees will be sent all the event details. The event includes both breakfast and lunch. While donations are appreciated, there is no cost to attend.

About Girls Empowerment Network - www.girlsempowermentnetwork.org

Through school-based programs, camps, and conferences, Girls Empowerment Network’s mission is to ignite the power in girls by teaching them the skills to thrive and believe in their ability to be unstoppable. Founded in 1996, Girls Empowerment Network envisions a world where all girls believe in their power.

About Excellence & Advancement Foundation – www.breakthepipeline.org

Excellence & Advancement Foundation is dedicated to transforming how communities combat the school-to-prison pipeline. They support children at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system through prevention, intervention, and advocacy programs.

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Commented [AJ7]: Same as above. Double check on Eva

Commented [AC8R7]: Agree.