

## **Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center launches Girls, Inc. program**

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NEWBURYPORT — In its quest to create safer communities and a future without domestic violence, on Jan. 6, the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center is offering its inaugural program as a Girls, Inc. affiliate: Steppingstones, a six-week course for 6- to 9-year-old girls promoting both physical activity and emotional well-being.

The Steppingstones program was created by Girls, Inc., and the curriculum has proven effective in boosting girls' self-esteem while building their own sense of physical power and ability, making them less vulnerable to abusive relationships, according to a press release. It is a fun, activities-based program that gets girls running, jumping, leaping, twisting, bending and balancing as they utilize a variety of equipment from jump ropes and balls to scooters and bowling pins. The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center became a provisional affiliate, Girls, Inc. of the Seacoast Area, in February in order to expand its support to girls. This is the first girls program the center is offering as a Girls, Inc. affiliate and is presented in collaboration with the YWCA Greater Newburyport.

"In the past we've worked with girls primarily in the schools doing education about healthy behaviors, healthy relationships and teen dating violence, as well as offering school-based support groups and individual and group counseling in our Amesbury office," said Suzanne Dubus, executive director of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. "While we will continue to do that work, we'd like to offer additional programs that build on girls' natural assets."

The six-week course, which begins Jan. 6, will meet at 4 p.m. every Tuesday at the Central Congregational Church and is open to any girls ages 6 to 9 from Newburyport, Amesbury, Salisbury, Ipswich, Rowley, Georgetown, Groveland, Merrimac, Newbury and West Newbury. To register, enroll at the YWCA Greater Newburyport, 13 Market St.; the registration fee is \$56 for nonmembers or \$34 for members. For more information, visit [www.ywcanewburyport.org](http://www.ywcanewburyport.org).