



Mary W. Sarris, Testimony

HELP Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety – July 16, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to participate in these very important Committee hearings on the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. As a Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, we are truly fortunate to have Senator Edward M. Kennedy as a leader in workforce development and committed to building and supporting a quality workforce system. On the North Shore of Massachusetts, we are also fortunate to have Congressman John Tierney as a leading member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and another leader and supporter of our work. Finally, we have Governor Deval Patrick and his Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, Suzanne Bump, working hard to support federal efforts with state funding as well as helping us at the local level build valuable partnerships that really make WIA work for our economy.

My testimony is based on five basic premises, which we believe are critical to our continued success both in the current challenging economic climate and as we build the 21st century workforce in Massachusetts and the nation.

First, those decisions that are made closest to the customer are the best decisions. When a job seeker, young person or company comes to the workforce system with an issue or challenge that is unique to that customer, those providing this service know the community and the conditions in which these challenges exist and are best situated to develop the most appropriate response and outcome. WIA reauthorization must continue to support a locally driven workforce system that strengthens effective partnerships among business, labor, educators and community and faith-based organizations to deliver effective workforce services.

Second, private sector-led workforce boards that create the strategic community based partnerships are the best vehicles for ensuring these quality workforce services for job seekers – both youth and adults – and companies. This is very hard and challenging work under the best of economies and local partnerships and collaborations, such as that envisioned in WIA through a WIB-led system of strong One Stop Career Centers is the only way that we can build and sustain a quality workforce system. We have seen this work on the North Shore of Massachusetts and in other regions of the Commonwealth where the Chief Elected Officials empower the WIB to develop and implement a strategic vision for the region. We hope that future legislation will strengthen our ability to make regional decisions with sufficient resources to make a significant



impact on the economy of our region while at the same time streamlining the administration of the regional workforce system.

Third, WIA must in the final analysis be an education and training system. Over the past decade, a significant amount of WIA resources have gone to support important infrastructure requirements of One-Stop Career Centers. While One-Stops are our primary labor exchange vehicle for workers and companies, siphoning off training funds to support infrastructure has decreased our ability to train workers for careers in emerging industry sectors. We need both a strong One-Stop system and a vibrant education and training capacity. Wagner-Peyser funds are most appropriate for the labor exchange functions of our local system. The continued delivery of employment services by state merit based staff in partnership with the local WIA provider will ensure the greatest flexibility and service options for our customers. Also, as provided for in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, we need greater flexibility to use training dollars to support worker skill upgrades through our system of community colleges and vocational technical schools. Training for both unemployed and incumbent workers must be part of a renewed commitment to responding to the dual challenges of the skill shortage and labor surplus problems we are facing in the current economy.

Fourth, we need a new approach to serving the needs of young people 16-24 years of age. Both nationally and in Massachusetts, the job market for teens (16-19) and many young adults (20-24 year olds) has collapsed in recent years. Nationally, teens did not gain any net new jobs during the national labor market recovery and expansion from 2003-2007, and Massachusetts' teens experienced a very similar fate. In the first three months of this year (2009), fewer than 30 of every 100 teens in the nation and state were employed. This is a record lows for both areas. At the national level, the U.S. Congress and the Obama administration included \$1.2 billion in WIA youth monies under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to create both summer and year-round jobs for economically disadvantaged 14-24 year olds. A federally-funded summer jobs program for teens has not been in existence since 2000. At the state level, the Patrick Administration has committed \$30 million in federal and state monies, including WIA youth months, YouthWorks and Shannon Community Safety Initiatives monies to help put 10,000 of the state's 14-24 year olds to work this summer. We need nothing less than a Teen Employment Marshall Plan to respond to the crisis of young people.

And, finally, of course, we should be held to strict accountability and transparency standards that ensure a wise and fruitful investment of public dollars. On the North Shore we have a belief that there are no secrets to what we do – all information on the programs we offer and the outcomes we achieve are available on our website and in constant meetings with our stakeholders and customers. This philosophy must be prevalent across the nation so that we can build support and involvement with all our stakeholders and the general public.



THE NORTH SHORE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

The NSWIB serves a community of 19 cities and towns located 12 miles north of Boston with a population of close to 400,000 individuals, labor force of over 200,000 and approximately 18,000 businesses. Our unemployment rate is at 8% matching the state of Massachusetts as a whole. As can be expected we are experiencing a swift downturn economically in conjunction with the state of Massachusetts and the rest of the country. Last year our unemployment rate was 4.7% with Mass at 4.8%.

The WIB consists of 35 members, with private sector representation from our critical industries including durable goods manufacturing, health care, construction and banking, along with our emerging industries of biotechnology and the Creative Economy. Public partners include the local community and state college, our largest K-12 school system, the carpenters union and the North Shore labor council, two community based organizations, one economic development agency, and of course the WIA mandated partners. We are a true “WIA WIB” in that we were established concurrent with the implementation of WIA in Massachusetts and have existed only under this legislation.

The city of Salem is our lead City, and provides strong partnership services including acting as the WIB’s fiscal agent and appointing authority to the board. Our Mayor, Kimberley Driscoll, is an active participant in workforce development and regularly engages her fellow mayors in this process.

The WIB, in partnership with Salem, oversees and charters on a bi-annual basis, a One Stop system that includes three One Stop Career Centers located throughout our region. In addition, we have a firm belief in the use of data to drive improvement, so have an active and we hope responsive labor market data division that provides information to the WIB and to other partners as they move their work forward. Finally, we believe in a sectoral approach to workforce development, and have several active sector industry partnerships in play reflecting our critical industries as mentioned above.

Our Strategic Plan has five primary goals, including:

1. Building the capacity of the North Shore Workforce System to meet labor market needs;
2. Fully engaging the business sector to close the skills gap that exists between available workers and employers;
3. Enhancing our Youth Pipeline by increasing and aligning education, training and employment programs
4. Increasing, strengthening and strategically aligning relationships with federal, state, and local partners/stakeholders



5. Managing and enhancing available resources to support and grow operations

Recently the NSWIB received High Performing WIB status through a rigorous review process designed by the state of Massachusetts. We believe this status reflects the strength of our local board and our ability, as a business-led local entity, to understand what is happening in our region and to respond appropriately and successfully to our labor market and economic circumstances. As stated above, we believe that strong WIBs are possible, a preferred method of service delivery, and result in quality services to companies and individuals, and we ask for continued support for this model in the next phase of WIA – we believe in the business adage that the best decisions are reached closest to the customer, and hope that this philosophy continues in WIA’s next life.

NSWIB YOUTH SERVING SYSTEM

The Workforce Investment Act provides us with the greatest share of youth money on the North Shore, totally \$962,420 in FY 2009. As stated above, we are fortunate to have several other youth funding streams through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts totaling \$542,163. In addition, for the past four years we have raised funds privately – approximately \$80,000 per year – to support a very small summer jobs program which we call F1rstJobs.

These non-federal funds help support WIA work but also provide us with the ability to work with teens and other young people who are in need but do not meet the WIA eligibility guidelines. For example, state funds include projects such as Pathways to Success by 21, which is a Massachusetts initiative through which the WIB convenes all youth serving agencies in our region and works with them to provide seamless employment and wrap around services to at risk youth. Through P-21 we have added freshmen college-level courses to our WIA Out of School Youth programs, providing WIA youth with the opportunity to leave WIA not only with a GED but with college credits to make their transition to college all that much more successful. These sorts of programs are critical to building the youth workforce system that helps all youth, including WIA youth, to make the leap into the primary labor market.

Even in the best economy our young people were struggling to transition into the primary labor market. For the past several years, in fact since the 1980’s, youth employment has been declining for several reasons, including elimination of many entry-level jobs, competition with returning retirees, and a perceived or real lack of employment preparedness in the youth pipeline. In 2008, the teen employment rate across the country was at 30%, the lowest rate in post World War II history. For 20 – 24 year olds, employment rates in 2008 were nearly 5% below those in 2000. In January 2009 young males were employed at nearly 10% lower than in early 2001. This crisis is even more compelling for low income youth, who, without networks and other supports, find it even more difficult to move successfully into work. We know through research



that in-school work experience leads to higher graduation rates, particularly among black and Hispanic males and leads to higher employment rates and earnings as young adults. In addition, labor markets with high teen employment rates for males reduces their involvement with the criminal justice system, and for females results in lower teen pregnancy rates.

In addition, as our local school districts work to increase graduation requirements so youth are better prepared to enter the high skilled work force – a good thing! – we are finding a cohort of youth who are, under these policies, struggling to graduate – in a way a group of youth who are caught in the middle of positive policy changes that have a negative impact on their future due to their current educational status. As the work world becomes more complex, virtually all young people (not to mention our adults), are finding it harder to move into and through this work world and toward careers and economic self sufficiency. WIA is a large part of the solution to this dilemma, and has made a huge difference in our region for those most at risk. However, the opportunity to modernize WIA to reflect our current economy and educational and social needs represents a chance to make WIA even better.

WIA SUCCESSES

WIA funds have been used by four youth serving organizations in our region to develop the capacity to deliver high quality workforce-related services to at risk youth. While these organizations had all been well respected in relation to their youth services, their connection to workforce development and their ability to help at-risk teens make informed education and career choices has been enormously enhanced by participating in WIA youth programs. They have learned how to engage youth in dual goals, including high school equivalency AND job AND college. As stated above, they have creatively brought in community college courses as part of their curriculum, and will be adding computer literacy training as a service for all their students. WIA has spearheaded this change – and we believe has added a critical level of quality and sophistication of services in our region.

We have been able to enhance our Career Center's ability to work with youth. Early on as a WIB our Career Center staff began coming to the WIB pleading for training and enhanced services for teen and older youth job development needs. These young customers were coming into the Centers that did not have programs and services appropriate for their circumstances. Through a strategic planning effort in cooperation with our Career Centers, the WIB established as a priority the development and support of a Youth Career Center, located in a separate office within one of our One Stop's location. This Youth Career Center, funded through WIA and other youth funds through the state of Massachusetts and private contributions, has allowed us to appropriately focus workforce services for this population, including job readiness workshops, assistance in applying for jobs, and referral to WIA or other youth programs. The YCC is not seen as separate from our One Stops, but an integral part of the One Stop system, so young



people as they mature easily move between the two, and come to know and understand these services as available to them at any time in their work life. In addition, our One Stop Career Center's Business Services Unit has developed an expertise in developing jobs for teens as well as adults, particularly during the summer season where teen jobs are in such demand.

IMPROVEMENTS TO WIA

WIA should be modified to change youth eligibility and to change the way we determine eligibility.

Current eligibility rules require stringent documentation, including income tests, academic skills assessments, previous criminal records, foster care information, and other documents that are by definition difficult to obtain and reflective of failure by those we are seeking to obtain them from. These very steps are demoralizing to the youth we are trying to enroll – how can we imagine an at-risk youth trying to make positive changes by enrolling in a quality WIA youth program only to be told that he or she has to prove their failures in order to begin the process. These youth are easily turned off by such bureaucracy – in fact we estimate that probably only 50% of those who begin this process actually complete it, representing a core of young people denied service by the system designed to provide these services.

In addition, these rules exclude a large population of needy youth whose families are struggling at just over poverty level, such as families who are eligible for free/reduced lunch or other federal income-tested programs. These teens are left out of critical growth experiences in the work world that could prevent them from falling into great poverty or other at-risk situations.

We do not ask that we lose our focus on serving the most at-risk. Instead we ask that local WIBs be given the authority, as they are under the WIA Adult programs, to develop a process that works for the population we are trying to serve. There are many ways to show need that are not inflammatory or degrading or difficult and bureaucratic to obtain. Income proxies from other federal, state, or local programs should be allowed. Partnerships and enhanced communication and mutual responsibility with other youth serving agencies or organizations should be encouraged so that referrals are made seamlessly and acceptable documentation received this way. Automatic eligibility, regardless of income, should be granted for certain risk factors such as youthful offender status, high school drop-out, teen parent, etc. We ask you to trust the local level to understand who needs to be served and how best to document this – we know that this will have an enormously positive benefit to the youth we are working to serve.

WIA should allow local regions to determine other aspects of service, such as the in school/out of school balance.

Through long conversations and debates, our Youth Council and WIB determined several years ago to focus our limited WIA youth funding on our out-of-school population. While not totally eliminating in-school services (we are currently at a 37%/63% in-school/out-of-school ratio.) we recognized a tremendous void in services for the out-of-school population in our region and have thus targeted our resources accordingly. The result are three



well-run and responsive programs for out-of-school youth that did not exist in the past, along with two very strong in-school programs working closely with the local school districts in keeping at risk teens in school. Other regions may see this issue differently, and reverse this structure. In any case, as mentioned above, we ask that decisions such as these remain with the local regions, ensuring that local needs are met.

The value of a summer employment program for at risk youth cannot be underestimated.

While we believe in the full WIA youth program model for at risk youth, we also know that large numbers of teens – in fact the majority of teens at all income levels – cannot find work during the summer. Summer employment is key to teens’ full workforce development and yet is basically unavailable even in good economic times. We know this by the number of youth who come to our Career Centers looking for work – and by the economic challenges that companies face when hiring youth. We know, for example, that the retail trade, often where a teen finds the first job, has, in many cases, made strategic decisions to increase minimum age for employment sometimes to 18 and often to 21. In addition, they are tapping an age cohort only recently available to retail, i.e., retirees, to fill the need for temporary and/or part time employment. Recent data collected by the Center for Labor market information at Northeastern University shows that summer employment nationally and across Massachusetts continues to decline every year, with of course a major decline expected this summer. We are fortunate this year that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allow us to provide this service to at risk youth this summer (albeit with the eligibility challenges as mentioned above). This should become a standard part of WIA, with priority service to low-income youth and with the ability of local WIBs to establish other priorities and documentation requirements. A permanent summer jobs program will be a very strong and fruitful investment in the lives of these youth AND in the strength of the youth pipeline.

INNOVATIVE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO MODERNIZE WIA

In summary, the above issues would result in THREE policy changes in a new WIA. These include:

1. The opportunity for local WIBs to establish eligibility policies and procedures around youth service, while retaining the requirement to give priority to low income, severely at-risk youth
2. Providing local authority to establish other program priorities, including the in-school/out of school program mix,
3. Allowing a permanent, stand-alone summer jobs program for all youth, with a focus on serving youth who are at or near poverty or exhibit other at-risk characteristics.

In addition other policy suggestions to modernize WIA would include:



- **Require secondary and post secondary institutions to work closely with the workforce system to better prepare all youth to consider careers within local and national critical and emerging industries, most of which have a STEM focus.** The workforce system is often relegated to the fringes of our traditional educational system, based on the overall American belief that individuals study first, and then go to work. While we are making progress, we have a long way to go to ensure that students at all levels see the connection between what they are learning in school and how it plays out in our high skilled work environment. For example, WIA should support the placement of teachers in summer externships where they practice their area of expertise in a work environment and then translate this experience into curriculum and related activities that make STEM real to young learners. The new WIA should provide incentives and supports to WIBs that work closely with their local school systems to develop and implement programs such as this and related curriculum that helps all youth become excited and committed to careers in STEM fields.
- **In addition, the new WIA should have incentives/options to allow local WIBs and the educational system to develop appropriate transition programs for youth.** We know that in too many cases youth are graduating from high school not prepared to college-level programming, whether of a certificate or associate/bachelor degree nature. WIBs, with their diverse membership of business, labor, education, and community organizations, are the perfect place for conversations around this challenge to take place – for both the adult and the youth customer. A modernized WIA would reward those regions that take on this dilemma and develop solutions that result in a greater transition to higher education and into high skilled jobs.
- **The new WIA should support and expand the ability of One Stop Career Centers to provide universal services to all youth within the community.** Currently, due to funding limitations and rules, most One Stops find it difficult and/or unallowable to provide these services. As mentioned above, WIA youth funds are limited to serving only the most at risk, and a Youth Career Center should be open to ALL youth, just as adult One Stops are open to all adults. We on the North Shore have been able to establish a Youth Career Center only because of additional state support for youth. We urge that the new WIA treat youth as the old WIA treats adults, i.e., individuals who need job-related services without regard to income or other factors.
- **The new WIA should adjust performance standards for all youth, regardless of age, to encourage continued education as well as job placement upon high school graduation or GED receipt.** We need to focus on helping young people choose a career path that will provide them with the opportunity to be economically self sufficient as adults. These paths in general require additional post secondary education



as well as work experience. Young people should be encouraged to consider multiple pathways to reaching their goals, and the new WIA should be designed to encourage these outcomes.

CONCLUSION

When Congress enacted the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 we were in a period of strong economic growth and global transition. WIA as designed at the time was right for transforming the job training system into the 21st century.

Global transition accomplished, we now face the most significant economic challenges since the Great Depression. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics more that 15 million people are officially out of work and our unemployment rate is approaching 10%. We have to rethink how we respond to the current labor surplus while at the same time prepare workers for those industry sectors that remain critical and/or are emerging, such as green job, high skilled manufacturing, and health care.

This will require keeping what worked and taking bold steps to make the changes that are needed now. We believe Congress should:

1. Continue support for local decision making through WIBS as partnership among business, labor, education, and community/faith-based workforce leaders;
2. Provide dedicated funding for the One Stop Career Center infrastructure in an effort to maximize training resources under WIB;
3. Create a Teen Employment Marshall Plan to respond to the youth employment crisis, including simpler and more locally driven eligibility and other programmatic policies, a permanent summer and/or year round jobs program, great connections to STEM careers, support for youth services in our One Stop system, transition support for youth to the next steps, and more appropriate performance outcomes;
4. Insure accountability while at the same time provide maximum local flexibility in program implementation.

We are at a crossroad and we need to take the best path to education, train, and put America's youth – and adults – back to work.

Thank you.



Profiles of Youth being served by WIA

Below are five vignettes of youth served through the North Shore Workforce Investment Board's WIA Youth programs. These programs are offered by four community-based organizations chosen through a competitive bid process on a bi-annual basis. They include:

- Action, Inc in Gloucester – Compass Program
- Catholic Charities in Lynn and Salem – Youthworks
- My Turn in Lynn – WIA Out-of School Youth Program
- Girls Inc in Lynn – Careerpath

We attach these stories to provide a more compelling picture of the employment and educational challenges of WIA youth and the creativity and dedication of our partners as they help these young people overcome these challenges..

Ashley

Ashley entered the Compass program in the fall of 2007 to complete requirements for her high school diploma. She was an out-of-school, older youth who only needed a few additional requirements for graduation. Through our program we set her up with a Credit Recovery academic plan which included participating in the Composition I course offered at Compass through North Shore Community College. We began the enrollment process with the Workforce Investment Board to qualify her for our programs after her three-week trial period. This was a complicated task because of the extensive paperwork required for eligibility. With out-of-school youth school many times documents are no longer valid because they are out-dated for WIA eligibility requirements and, many of our students-including Ashley do not have their social security cards in their possession. It is difficult for our students who do not have transportation and other forms of identification to get a duplicate card. Ashley's mother is hearing impaired and their only form of income is her disability check, but getting this documentation is a long process. Eventually Ashley was approved through WIA in April. Ashley continued with the program throughout the process and received her Gloucester High School diploma in June of 2008, three years after her anticipated graduation date. She was placed in work experience at Addison Gilbert Hospital where she got experience and earned her first ever pay check. Ashley has just completed her first year at North Shore Community College in the medical administrative assistant program, making the dean's list. She is looking forward to returning to school in the fall and getting her associates degree.

Chris

Chris was a bit of a "sad sack" when he first arrived at the Catholic Charities GED Program in May of 2008. His scores showed that he would need to make a long term commitment in order to successfully pass his GED. He participated in the summer employment program by working in the maintenance department at the Catholic Charities Day Care Center. The director of the day care often commented on how he managed to paint himself more than the walls. Slowly, we watched Chris grow. He became a strong and dedicated student in the fall. He worked hard in class and was never shy about asking questions. All the staff at the Center got to know him and would often ask how



he was doing. One year after Chris began the program, he took his GED test in May of 2009. Although, he did not pass the math section, he did successfully pass the other four tests. He wanted to take the retest in math right away and came to the program every day during the following month. On June 18, 2009, Chris graduated with the rest of the class, having successfully passed all five sections of the GED. Now he is planning to attend Marion Court College in September and in order to feel more acclimated to the campus, he is spending this summer's employment opportunity on the campus working in the grounds keeping department.

Ilesha

Ilesha was sixteen when she entered the program, pregnant but very determined to find a way to put her life back together. She was considered a ward of the state and was living with an aunt here in Lynn. She was enrolled in the program in February of 2008 and progressed rapidly toward her GED. While she was in the program, she participated in the Navigating the Future College Writing class as well as the Transitions to College Course, earning her 4 college credits. Within two months, she took her GED test and passed. She then participated in the summer youth employment component and was placed at the CAEP (College Application Education Program) as a youth mentor. Barely over 17, she gave birth to her son in July. Her plans were to move forward and she wanted to attend college class over the summer, but reality taught her that she needed to pace herself and she postponed starting until September. A referral was made for her to connect up with the Healthy Families Program to help her with parenting skills and how to time manage. She enrolled at North Shore Community College in January, 2009 and has been attending full time. During the last conversation with Ilesha, she expressed that she is doing very well and that she is exactly where she had hoped she would be in her life.

Laporscha

Laporscha first entered the program back in February, 2008 looking to get her GED and find a job, eventually entering the field of criminal justice. Her attendance in the program was remarkable from the beginning. While attending classes, Laporscha showed a strong interest in almost everything we had to offer. Her adventure started when she took part in a focus group sponsored by the Commonwealth Corp on a new initiative called "Think Again". The program was designed to help young people make choices while they were in middle school. She was hooked and wanted to know and do more. We offered to have her enroll in the Northeast Youth Leadership Program and in July, 2008 she spent three days and two nights at Merrimack College in Andover attending a training to become a youth leader. While still attending the GED classes, she also participated the Navigating the Future/ North Shore Community College, Transition to College course. Using the skills she had acquired in the training, Laporscha started a work experience placement as the coordinator for the Think Again Project. The design was to have her work with and in the local middle schools to help reach young people thinking about quitting school. She also did a summer youth employment placement at the Catholic Charities North Day Care Center. She worked for 7 weeks in the day care helping with feeding, daily games and activities and assisting the teaching staff. She got a job at the local Taco Bell and was happy to be bringing in a pay check. All the while, she was dealing with serious social issues at home that frequently left her homeless, penniless and with no one to turn to. Amazingly, Laporscha continued to take advantage of everything the program could offer to her. By the winter, she made a difficult decision



to go to California to live and work with her grandmother and her aunt. She left in January, 2009 in hopes of finding a new life and a new direction. With the beginning of spring, Laporscha returned to Lynn. She called and asked if she could return to the program. Here she has a sense of direction and meaning and she would like to continue toward the dreams and goals she first established a year ago. Very few students take advantage of as many opportunities as Laporscha did, and hopefully, she will continue to reach out to all we have to offer.

Gisell

Gisell came to Girls Inc. from the Dominican Republic during the summer. If she had stayed in the Dominican Republic, she would have been entering her senior year of high school. Her first language was Spanish, so she needed to work on her English. In Lynn she started school as a junior. The Career Path Program funded by the Workforce Investment Board changed everything for her. She says, "I didn't know the way to get into college, especially here in the United States. They showed me everything. Every question I had, they answered." Gisell used every resource available. She found the workshops on interviewing for a job and financial literacy especially valuable – she says these are good skills for life. She found the weekly Mentor Program that is part of Career Path was just what she needed to take the many steps she had to take to reach her academic and life goals. She was matched with a volunteer mentor from Lynn who supported and encouraged her, and she found she could make use of the differences in their life experiences. Gisell was accepted at the college of her dreams! However, she ran into a major bump in the road. While the college offered her some financial assistance, she came to realize that she did not want to put her family into debt. Gisell is very strong minded, so she was not excited about making a back-up plan. But she says that the Career Path Coordinator and Academic Advisor for the Career Path Program helped her to see that going to another college was not the end of the world and that she could still reach her long term goals. They helped her adapt successfully to her real life circumstances. Gisell is currently doing well at North Shore Community College and is a member of the Honor Society. She is struggling with one class. She used connections she made while in the Career Path Program to continue working with TRIO and join a study group to help her with the challenging class. Gisell did a summer internship in Lynn at the community dental center. From this experience she gained the confidence that she could "do anything". Later she worked weekends at Brooksby Village leading activities for elders, and they loved her! She also took advantage of a volunteer who came to Girls Inc. to do a physics project in which she made a wooden triangle fly using electricity. She also attended an architecture class taught by a Girls Inc. Board member. Gisell says, "I never would have made it to where I am now without Girls Inc. and the Career Path Program."