



Contact: Adrienne Royer, Director  
of Development and  
Communications  
423-624-4757 or  
aroyer@girlsincofchatt.org

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## Girls Inc. Teens Meet Gov. Bredesen on Infant Mortality Project

Chattanooga, Tenn.—Infant mortality is not a topic that teenagers would normally discuss. This year, a group of teens with Girls Incorporated of Chattanooga have created a social marketing campaign to raise awareness of the problem of infant mortality in Tennessee—Project I.M.P.A.C.T. (Infant Mortality Public Awareness Campaign for Tennessee). The project culminated at a documentary premiere and celebration with Governor Bredesen in Nashville on Friday.

In 2007, the state of Tennessee ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation with the highest number of infants dying before their first birthday. A grant from the Governor's Office on Children's Care Coordination, through the Oasis Center in Nashville, funded Girls Inc. and a site in Nashville and Memphis to create a youth-led marketing campaign designed to raise awareness of the issues surrounding infant mortality—preconception health, nutrition, drug and alcohol abuse, and access to health care among many other factors.

“Hamilton County has one of the highest low-birth weight rates in the state of Tennessee,” explained Tracy Windeknecht, Manager of Special Projects at Girls Inc. “African-American women are 2.5 times more likely to lose their babies. Governor Bredesen wants to raise awareness among teens to prevent the women of tomorrow from experiencing the loss of a baby.”

Molly Secours, a critically-acclaimed filmmaker and author, gathered video footage created by the teens and interviewed public health experts and public officials to create a 30-minute documentary on the issue of infant mortality and the teens' work to raise awareness about the issue.

Throughout this year, the teens met after-school, on weekends and over spring break to learn about infant mortality. Teens worked with professionals in health, marketing, drama, video production and graphic design to create print, radio and television public service announcements. The final products premiered before the Governor on Friday and will run on local TV and radio stations in the upcoming months.

The Girls Inc. Project I.M.P.A.C.T. plans on continuing their work in Hamilton County. Girls Inc. will host a documentary premiere on September 4 and town hall meetings throughout the community. During the 2008-2009 school year, Project I.M.P.A.C.T. plans to create additional PSAs and add an in-school task force in local high schools.

Project I.M.P.A.C.T. members include Nii-lante' Boyd (Harrison), Edward Wood (East Brainerd), Kermisha Tate (East Chattanooga), Gessyca Jones (Brainerd), Morgan Hardy (East Brainerd), Jamieca Love (Brainerd), Markesha Dunham (Downtown Chattanooga), Debora Bomfim (East Ridge), and Jasmine Ray (Downtown Chattanooga).

Girls Incorporated of Chattanooga inspires all girls to be *strong, smart and bold<sup>sm</sup>* by providing a healthy and positive environment where girls can enjoy being girls; by providing enriching programs that nurture their capacity for personal achievement, confident adulthood and economic independence; and by advocating for an equitable society. Since 1961, Girls Inc. has served more than 22,000 girls Hamilton County. For more information, please call 423-624-4757 or visit [www.girlsincofchattanooga.org](http://www.girlsincofchattanooga.org).

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