

Media Release

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Weighing in on Body Talk: Girls Inc. and the Health Unit Partner to Challenge You to a “Fat Talk” Free Week

The week of October 16-22 is Fat-Talk Free week, and Girls Incorporated of Upper Canada, in partnership with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit asks that everyone **accept the challenge of “no fat talk” by thinking twice about using statements that are damaging to self-esteem and body image – particularly for girls and women.**

“Fat talk” isn’t about being overweight. It is the language that we use about ourselves and others when we talk negatively about dieting, losing weight and appearance. This kind of talk contributes to the pressure for girls and women to be thin and is evident in popular music, television and movies. **Accepting the challenge of being “fat talk free,” for the week, the month, or the whole year, helps us to avoid those statements that help keep unrealistic standards of beauty and the fear and hatred of fat alive in our culture.**

In young people, as well as adults, focusing on appearance can lead to disordered eating and preoccupation with food, fear of gaining weight, depression, issues with body image and lowered self-esteem. **“There are alternatives to fat talk that make us feel empowered and accepting of our bodies,” states** Dr. Jackie Schoemaker-Holmes, sociologist and Executive Director of Girls Inc. **“This week gives us an exciting opportunity to explore and challenge hatred of fat in ourselves, others and our culture.** It allows us the freedom to explore alternatives such as the philosophy and practice of **Health At Every Size** which is based on a simple premise– that the best way to improve health is to honour our bodies.”

To kick off the week, Girls Inc. will be holding a Body Image Workshop for girls ages 12-16 featuring the Prescott-based fibre art artist Wendo Van Essen and her beautiful felted “Flirts” which are intended to inspire and acknowledge shape and size diversity and acceptance. The workshop will be held on October 12 at 6pm-8pm at the Brockville Public Library.

During the Week itself, Girls Inc., in partnership with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Health Unit, will host a workshop for service providers and interested members of the community. The workshop, entitled **“Weighing In On Body Talk: challenging our language and action in service provision and everyday life”** will be held on October 19th from 9am-12pm at the Health Unit (Brockville location). **For more information or to register call Michelle at Girls Inc. 613-345-3295.**

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