

Tomorrow's Leaders

KSU freshman is "CosmoGIRL!" of the Year

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If the world had more people like Haley Kilpatrick, it would be in better hands.

Two and a half years ago Haley dedicated her life to her non-profit organization, Girl Talk. "I have come to the conclusion that the most effective way of reaching my generation of youth is no longer through school administration but through students reaching students," Haley said in her initial letter to middle school parents. The letter went on to explain Haley's mission for Girl Talk. The girls would initially meet Tuesday mornings and discuss problems that are prominent in a middle school girl's daily life. The topics for discussion included "Materialistic Madness" and "Gossiping," among others, and girls would discuss and often times relate back to the Bible to find out the true meaning of the subjects. In addition to these preset topics, Haley encouraged the girls to leave questions in a box, so those topics could be addressed in the next session.

In its first few months Girl Talk was a huge success. The following winter, January 2003, the second chapter of Girl Talk began in Tallahassee, Fl. Shortly after that, in March, the second Georgia chapter of Girl Talk was started.

But what is the reason for all of this? What drove a 16-year-old girl to do this? What was her motivation?

At that time, Haley's younger sister, Kelly, was in middle school. Haley described Kelly as spunky, but when Kelly would come home from school she could really relate to the way her sister felt. For most girls, middle school is a time of uncertainty. Haley recalled an instance in middle school in which one of her classmate's college football fan father took all the girls, except Haley, to the game in his camper and let them spend the night. The girls came back with pictures to show in class. A light bulb went off in Haley's head after she saw that Kelly was feeling similarly. If she went through this, and her sister is going through this, then there has to be other girls out there who feel the same way.

Since its inception, Girl Talk has grown from the initial three schools, to include eight in Georgia,



Haley Kilpatrick makes a difference in the lives of young girls.

as well as chapters in eleven states nationwide.

By Spring 2004, Girl Talk was in full swing, and Haley was a few months away from graduating high school. She knew that money for out of state tuition would be an issue, so she did what most high school seniors do their last semester of high school -- she searched for scholarships online. Through various scholarship Web sites, Haley applied for many small scholarships until she came across a \$10,000 scholarship being awarded by "CosmoGIRL!" magazine and Maybelline New York. The scholarship was being awarded to a girl who reached out to her community and made a difference. At first glance Haley did not think she stood a chance to win the \$10,000 and decided not to apply, but she never fully put the thought out of her head.

The night before the scholarship application was due, Haley decided she had nothing to lose and applied for the scholarship.

The following summer, Haley was in Texas working for Girl Talk when she got a call from the editors at "CosmoGIRL!." Along with the \$10,000 scholarship, Haley was featured in the magazine as their 2004 "CosmoGIRL!" of the Year. In addition, Haley was flown to New York City for the Born to Lead Awards, where she received a complimentary makeover. Haley had her makeup done by Maybelline New York makeup artist Melissa Silver, and her hair was done by Wendy and Oscar Bond of Oscar Bond Salon in NYC.

As for all of the small scholarships? Haley never heard from a single one. But her story is far from over.

After seeing Haley featured in "CosmoGIRL!," American Eagle Outfitters approached her to take part in their Spring 2005 campaign appropriately titled "Live your Life." The campaign features Haley, along with five other young people who have accomplished one of their biggest dreams. The stories and faces of these adolescents will be displayed throughout American Eagle stores, gift cards and bags. In addition to being the fresh faces of the Spring 2005 campaign, the six achievers will serve as judges in the company's "Live Your Life" contest, in which young adults who are 14-years-old and up can enter by submitting either a 300-word essay or a five minute video/DVD explaining their dream. The panel of judges will pick six winners who have the opportunity to win up to \$25,000. The contest runs until Feb. 23 and entry forms are available in stores, as well as at www.ae.com/liveyourlife.

With so much good that has already happened for Haley and Girl Talk, it seems that there is only more good in the future. She has a tentative appearance on "Oprah," which will be sponsored by American Eagle slated for late February. There is also talk of a second branch of Girl Talk called Teen Talk in the works.

Teen Talk will be similar to Girl Talk, but will focus on high school girls. The organization will bring college girls who are heavily involved in extracurricular activities to talk to high school girls and tell them about life experiences and what they should expect out of college.

When she was asked what else she has in store for Girl Talk, Haley said that she would love to see Girl Talk in each of the 50 states.