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Haley Kilpatrick speaks to Dougherty Rotary Club on “Girl Talk”

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ALBANY – It all started as an idea in the mind of Haley Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick was 16 years old at the time and a student at Deerfield-Windsor School. The idea was to start a mentoring program in which high school girls would mentor middle school girls. The idea started during a conversation with her mother Tonya Kilpatrick, who works at WALB and is a familiar face on the “Business Spotlight” program.

After the idea began to take shape, she took it to headmaster W.T Henry. Henry liked the idea, but told her to work on it some more. Kilpatrick refined the idea and on her second presentation to the headmaster, it was accepted. Now, at 19, Kilpatrick finds her “Girl Talk” concept in 13 states and she has made a goal of getting it into 50 states by the year 2010.

Many of the young ladies who were mentored by Kilpatrick three years ago, find themselves in the reverse role of being mentors to middle school girls. “God works through the program,” she said during her talk this week to the Daugherty Rotary Club. The club heard of the amazing growth of an idea that started in the teenager girl’s mind and now has major sponsors asking to be involved in its growing popularity.

Southern living Magazine will be in Albany next month to outline the story of “Girl Talk” and its growing popularity. A large retail chain has thrown in their support and is hoping to assist Kilpatrick with dissemination of the “Girl Talk” idea. “No matter what the problem, there was somebody there for the girls to talk to,” Kilpatrick said during her presentation.

One of the discoveries made by Kilpatrick when she started mentoring the younger girls was that they brought her problems that seem small to adults, but to the middle schoolers were huge.

“We were able to tell them it would all be alright and that things were not as big as they might seem, because we had been there before the and experienced the same worries and concerns. ” “Desire to Inspire” is one of the ideals they try to impress on the younger girls.

Kilpatrick is quick to give credit to others for the growing popularity of the idea she and her mother refined during those early conversations.

She says people like W.T Henry, Bobby Joiner and others were big parts in the growth of the program. Joiner is also an Albanian and has ministry in the area that includes youth and even those in prison. Joiner has taught and coached in Albany schools for years and has been the guiding light for many of Albany’s youngsters.

Kilpatrick has an impressive resume for someone so young. She was the Cosmo Girl of the year in 2004. That award was accompanied by a \$10,000 scholarship.

The rush to join her has resulted in the formation of a not-for-profit enterprise that is planning all sorts of related products from pillowcases to clothing. All this to promote girls mentoring girls.

Kennesaw State University where Kilpatrick is enrolled has even joined in the promotion of the idea. The college purchased ads in “Georgia Trend” for the promotion of “Girl Talk.”

Still remaining humble she seems puzzled that her modest idea has taken on such huge proportions. “I still get the 15-20 contacts everyday from people all over the country wanting information on the program,” she said after addressing the Rotarians.

Kilpatrick hasn’t even turned 20 years of age and will candidly tell anyone that she really doesn’t understand how all this has happened. She says it still all amazes her and she doesn’t have all the answers. However, at 19 she has conquered worlds that many adults will never conquer.

The way things are developing in her life and with her ideas that seem to inspire others, the future looks promising indeed for this Albanian who once thought being a mentor to younger girls as a way of making their lives less stressful might be a good idea.