

This page shows the article as it originally appeared in the newspaper. The article itself can be read on the following page.

PARENTING

Girls united



More than 100 girls from across the country gathered in Dublin for the first time to discuss their experiences of being bullied. The girls, aged between 11 and 15, were part of a project run by the National Children's Advocacy Centre (NCAC) and the National Council for Child Protection (NCCP).

The girls were given the opportunity to share their stories and to learn from each other's experiences. They were also given the chance to discuss their feelings and to seek advice from experts in the field.

The project was a success and the girls were very happy to be able to share their experiences. They were also given the chance to learn from each other's experiences and to seek advice from experts in the field.

Udo's Choice®
At the heart of the family.

Udo's Choice® is a natural, organic, and healthy choice for your family. It is a delicious and nutritious beverage that is perfect for children and adults alike.

Udo's Choice® is available in a variety of flavors, including Original, Strawberry, and Blueberry. It is a great choice for your family and is available in a variety of sizes.

Udo's Choice® is a natural, organic, and healthy choice for your family. It is a delicious and nutritious beverage that is perfect for children and adults alike.

Udo's Choice® is available in a variety of flavors, including Original, Strawberry, and Blueberry. It is a great choice for your family and is available in a variety of sizes.

This is the article's web address for reference.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/archive/2010/0921/Pg045.html#Ar04501>

The User may not copy, reproduce, distribute, or create derivative works from the Content without expressly being authorised to do so by the relevant copyright owner. © Copyright 2013 The Irish Times. All Rights Reserved.

Girls united

A Swedish organisation established by teenagers could provide a useful model for young Irish girls keen to equip themselves against the pitfalls of modern life

MODERN LIFE is tough for teenage girls. Early and inappropriate sexualisation combined with a culture of binge drinking can lead to some fairly risky behaviour and potentially result in very unpleasant outcomes. Pubescent girls are under intense pressure to conform to various idealised and unhealthy body stereotypes foisted upon them by society and often accepted passively and adhered to unquestioningly.

No wonder mothers, older sisters and concerned females who have reached the relative safety of our 20s, 30s and beyond worry as they watch these vulnerable young women with their post-coital hairstyles, Day-Glo tans and ill-fitting air of insouciance hanging around pubs and nightclubs often very much the worse for wear.

For worried parents, the temptation is to impose curfews aimed at curbing the more excessive manifestations of carefree youth. The reality is that knee-jerk draconianism never works. Ever since Rapunzel let down her hair, teenage girls have been climbing out of upstairs windows and shinning down drainpipes to join in with the fun.

The most effective way of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our teens must surely depend on them taking responsibility for their own behaviour without feeling smothered by the fear of what might go wrong. We need to encourage them to take charge of their own wellbeing while still allowing them to assert their independence. After all, everyone deserves the opportunity to enjoy the judicious hedonism of their teens before taking on the weighty responsibility of

ties of adulthood.

A Swedish organisation established by teenagers could provide a useful model for young Irish girls keen to equip themselves against the pitfalls of modern life. This practical and proactive scheme, called United Sisters, was developed by two Swedish teenagers in 1996 with the express aim of shoring up self-esteem by exploding myths relating to body image and early sexualisation.

To date the United Sisters initiative has helped hundreds of Swedish females aged 12-20 cope with the pressures of modern life. The girls who participate come from a wide variety of backgrounds and all of the projects have been developed in response to the suggestions and requirements of the participants themselves.

Weekly get-togethers facilitate frank discussions that encompass issues relevant to this age group including sex, drugs, role models, violence and prejudice. The intention is to allow the girls to explore these highly charged topics in a safe, supportive and informed environment. Voluntary adult coaches with relevant expertise are on hand for the occasions when their intervention is deemed appropriate.

Perhaps the most radical and effective aspect of the programme are the voluntary night patrols involving girls aged 16-20 who walk the streets of Gothenburg and Stockholm helping young people who are too drunk to take care of themselves, embroiled in a hostile or confrontational situation or simply upset and in need of someone to talk to. Each volunteer undertakes an intensive three-month training programme aimed at developing self-protection techniques, first aid, ethics, legal studies, drug knowledge and conflict resolution.

This proactive and empowering scheme is working well in Sweden and there are no obvious barriers to the potential roll-out of something similar in other countries including our own.

More information can be found at unitedsisters.se

**ELEANOR
FITZSIMONS**

SISTER ACT: WHAT DO IRISH GIRLS THINK OF A UNITED FRONT?

A group of Irish girls, all aged 16, were asked what they thought of United Sisters and if they would welcome such an initiative here.

"I would think it would work really well. Girls over here have problems with who they are and the way they look and I think that [United Sisters] would open their eyes more to the world. It shows us that we are equal, and it will teach us and show us that this is the way we need to be. It will make us more aware of our lives and how we should be treated in this world."

– **Sabrina**

"I think it is a brilliant idea and it is very important thing to have something like this scheme and I would be very happy if we could have it in Dublin."

– **Marcia**

"I think that the United Sisters programme would work very well in Dublin. I feel that it would be a great resource for many young girls and would really help them. However, the night patrol could be dangerous."

– **Rachel**

"I think it's a very interesting idea, and one that would help a lot of young girls in Dublin. I would be concerned about the safety of girls on night patrol, but other than that I think it sounds really good. I feel the girl groups would be a great support, and I would

definitely consider joining."

– **Jenny**

"United Sisters seems like a great idea. I think it would really improve the Dublin area to have a scheme like this in place."

– **Ailish**

"I think Dublin would really benefit from an organisation like the United Sisters, as it deals with everyday issues that we deal with in Dublin such as drinking and drug abuse. It also gives young girls the chance to get involved in something positive."

– **Helena**

"There is no other organisation out there for young women in need of support. There is too much emphasis on looks in modern day society, which is catastrophic for young women's development. Intelligence and what's going on inside is more important. This realisation would be hugely beneficial for young women in Dublin. I think United Sisters is a perfect way to teach fulfilment in a young woman's life in Dublin."

– **Lauren**

"I think United Sisters is a great idea that would help the girls of Dublin to be more secure and confident with who they are as individuals. I think the scheme would be of great benefit to young women, but I personally would not feel safe doing night patrols in Dublin."

– **Siobhán**



Ever since Rapunzel let down her hair, teenage girls have been climbing out of upstairs windows and shinning down drainpipes to join in with the fun.