

Annual Report

2020-2021



**A Girls' Civic
Leadership
Program**



Ms President US

www.mspressidentus.org

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A Message From Our Founder:

Dear Friends,

We couldn't have done it without you!

Thanks to the support of our gifted volunteers and generous donors, we conquered new frontiers and achieved one of our most important goals: to launch a virtual program and reach girls regardless of their location or financial circumstances.

Undeterred by restrictions on in-person gathering, Ann Nunes of Wilton CT grabbed the helm. A mother of two amazing adolescent girls, Ann joined forces with education experts, Virginia Gunther and Amanda Mitchell, to launch a virtual program from her home. Featuring an impressive array of women leaders at the local, state and federal level – and including fun, interactive games and Mentor-led breakout groups – girls around the country were given a unique opportunity to connect with others like them: girls who are inspired to make a difference – girls who may someday become our future leaders themselves.

Full scholarships were awarded to 40% of the enrolled girls, thanks to the generous support of the Fairfield County Community Foundation, League of Women Voters, Eversource, Fairfield County Bank, and ROCK STAR individual donors. Really, we can't do any of this without you.

Meanwhile, positive changes have been underway nationwide. Since the program began in 2016, the percent of women in government is heading up:

- **Local** women leaders have increased from 17% to 31%.
- Women in **state** legislatures have increased from 24% to 31% with Nevada leading the way as the first state to have women occupy more than half of elected seats (currently 60%).
- **Nationally**, women occupy 27% of the seats in US Congress, up from fewer than 20%, and a woman was elected Vice President for the first time in our nation's history.

While we have not yet reached that ultimate goal of a woman President of the United States, we are getting closer. And our girls see it. With your enthusiasm – the encouragement of friends, family, neighbors, teachers, and the greater community – girls today are preparing to do their part tomorrow, to lead us to more equitable representation.

Meanwhile, we have a busy year ahead with an incredible team dedicated to the program's success. We've partnered with professional volunteers affiliated with Catchafire and the Pro Bono Network to advise us each step of the way as we seek to reach more girls in more communities. Currently, three more chapters are planned for 2021-2022 and plans for another Virtual Program are underway.

Thanks for all you do to uplift the girls in your world – whether she is living in your house, across the street, or in another state – each of us can make a meaningful difference in our future, together!

With warmth and appreciation,

Liz Osterhus

Advisory Board

Ridgefield

Liz Osterhus Executive Director and Founder

Rudy Marconi First Selectman, Ridgefield Connecticut

Cristina Andreana, CPA ACT Financial and Tax Services, LLC

Mimi Anglade CEO and Founder of sparqGen

Michele Booth Board Member, League of Women Voters of Ridgefield

Toni Boucher Former Connecticut State Senator

Wayne Floegel Ridgefield Registrar of Voters

Jeff Goncalves Program Director, Boys and Girls Club of Ridgefield

Hildegard Grob Executive Director, Keeler Tavern Museum

Darrin McGuire Vice President of Orthopedics at Sectra, Inc

Brenda McKinley Director, Ridgefield Library

Ex-Officio

Mary Barneby Former CEO, Girl Scouts of CT

Allison Hauser Executive Director, Girls on the Run NYC

Kimberly Mitchem-Rasmussen Founder of Girls in Politics

Patricia Russo Executive Director, The Campaign School at Yale

EVALUATIONS CONSULTANT

Jennifer Kehl Group Vice President, Innovation Practice, Nielsen

OPERATIONS CONSULTANT

Eric Milgram Vice President of Operations, Precision LTD

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANT

Leah Hayes Dir. of Strategic Advancement - Blankenship CPA Group, PLLC

STAFF

Amanda Cordano Program Manager

Wilton

Ann Nunes Chapter Leader

Amanda Mitchell Co-Leader

Virginia Gunther Co-Leader

Lynne Vanderslice First Selectwoman

ADVISORY GROUP

Kim Mellin

Sabeth Albert

Dr. Golnar Raissi-Sadeghi

Captain Mary A. Durand

Mary Gail Gristina

Dr. Gregory Chann

Genevieve Eason

Tom Moore

Dr. Kevin Smith

Jennifer Lalor

Keenia Joseph

Simona Vasile

Mary Anne Mendola Franco

JUNIOR ADVISORY GROUP

Savannah Joseph

Ms President US Wilton (2019)

Ms President US Mentor (2020-2021)

Avni Gupta

Ms President US Mentor (2019-2020)

Julienne Nunes

Ms President US Wilton (2020)

Ms President US Participant (2018-2021)

Sponsors & Partners

SPONSORS

Eversource

Fairfield County Bank

Fairfield County's Community Foundation

League of Women Voters

LWV Ridgefield

LWV Wilton

Lewis Fund

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Town of Ridgefield Connecticut

Keeler Tavern, Museum and History Center

The Campaign School at Yale University

Ridgefield Library

Women's Center of Greater Danbury

Girl Scouts of Connecticut

Boys & Girls Club of Ridgefield

RPAC Art Center and Academy

League of Women Voters

Wilton Historical Society

CORPORATE MATCHING

Principal Financial

AmazonSmile

SUPPORTERS

Anonymous

Kavya Anand

Jennifer Andjelkovic

Mary Anglade

Mary Anglade

Brenda Aversano

Aniello Aversano

Christine Baer

Michele Booth

Toni Boucher

Hersha Chauhan

Dianna Colabella

Joe Collin

Amanda Cordano

Anabel Cordano

Anita Donofrio

Ruth Feldman

Margaret Fleurette

Wayne Floegel

Susan Graham

Silvana Grant

Charlotte Griggs

Mary Gail Gristina

Hildegard Grob

Leah Hayes

Jennifer Kehl

Caroline Kellen

Annie Larussa

Gail Lehmann

Jane Lindenburg

Rudy Marconi

Jim McGrath

Brenda Mckinley

Thomas Moore

Lisa Newfield

Glori Norwitt

Martha Olson

Joyce Onyango

Liz Osterhus

Briggs & Jessica Tobin

Simona Vasile

Caroline Vilinskis

Alison Villanueva

Walter Wickersham

Section

01

Who We Are



Our Program

Through our program, girls learn about public speaking, diplomacy and listening skills, local/state/federal government, and women's history while having an opportunity to meet and greet exemplary female leaders. The program culminates with a campaign and election for Ms President US. The winner accompanies their First Selectman, at appearances and speaking engagements throughout the year, until the next Ms President US is elected.

The program was launched in Ridgefield CT in 2017-2018. With the support of our partners, the program will be promoted for replication in other towns in subsequent years.

While there are some wonderful programs focused on inspiring high school girls to engage in civic leadership, there are no community-based initiatives (currently known) that focus on engaging younger girls. The Ms President US program aims to reach girls at a pivotal age, before their self-esteem transitions from peak to plummet, as commonly takes place during the middle school years.

Founded on November 9, 2016, Ms President US is a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code EID #82-2508937.

Our Mission and Goals

1

Demonstrate to girls the importance of female involvement in public service, the responsibility it entails, and the opportunity it provides.

2

Impart exemplary values in future leaders- values that unite, uplift, and inspire regardless of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At Ms President US, each of us contributes to inclusion, from the Board to the volunteers. Our culture is the result of our behaviors, our personal commitment, our curiosity, how we collaborate, and the ways that we share our perspectives and encourage others to do the same. Our inclusive culture empowers all of us to connect, belong, and grow.



Changing Girls' Attitudes

"We went to the Capitol with the state senator at the time and he gave us a citation that said, 'Ms President US.' He said it on front of the whole House of Representatives."

Hersha Chauhan, Ridgefield 2018

"It was super inspiring to hear all the women come and speak to you, thinking, 'One day I could grow to be like them.'"

Gopika Sheth, Hamden 2019 & 2020



"My big take away? Stand up for what you believe in."

**Eva Trachtenberg
Ridgefield 2020**

Our Journey

2016

Organization founded

2018

Election held at Ridgefield Playhouse

Event hosted by award-winning entertainer Christine O'Leary

2020

MPU launches first virtual elections in the wake of a global pandemic

2017

Program launches

First session begins

MPU makes local news

Partnership with "Women Who Inspire"

2019

3rd Election Year begins

2018 winners celebrate success at Ballard Park concert

Past Winners

2018

Hersha Chauhan

Ridgefield
"Time off Technology"

Brianna Razeq

Danbury
Anti-Bullying

2019

Kyela McGuire

Ridgefield
"Zero Waste"

Juliette Arencibia

Ridgefield
Venezuela's Malnutrition Crisis

Gigi Wheeler

New Castle
Pollution

Gopika Sheth

Hamden
Transportation Access

Savannah Joseph

Wilton
Plastic Pollution

2020

Gopika Sheth

Hamden
Diversity

Eva Trachtenberg

Ridgefield
LGBTQ+ Issues

Julienne Nunes

Wilton
Peer Pressure

Our Mentors

Our mentors (9th-12th graders) keep the girls on topic, help avoid partisan politics, address issues of concern, provide encouragement, collect and report feedback, exemplify leadership, and act as Ms President US Ambassadors in their community and beyond.



Our Reach

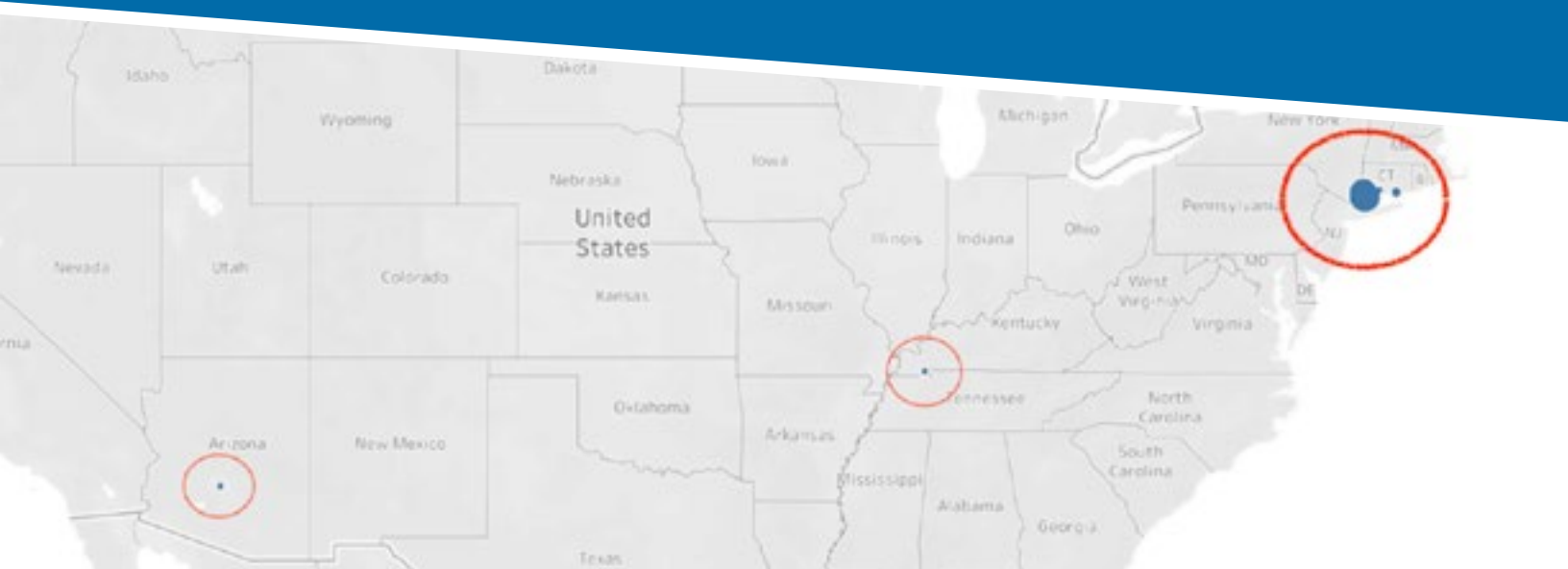
In 2020-2021 we had:

56 participants
across 3 states and 13 towns

33 4th-8th graders

23 9th-12th grade mentors

Nation-wide participation
for the first time

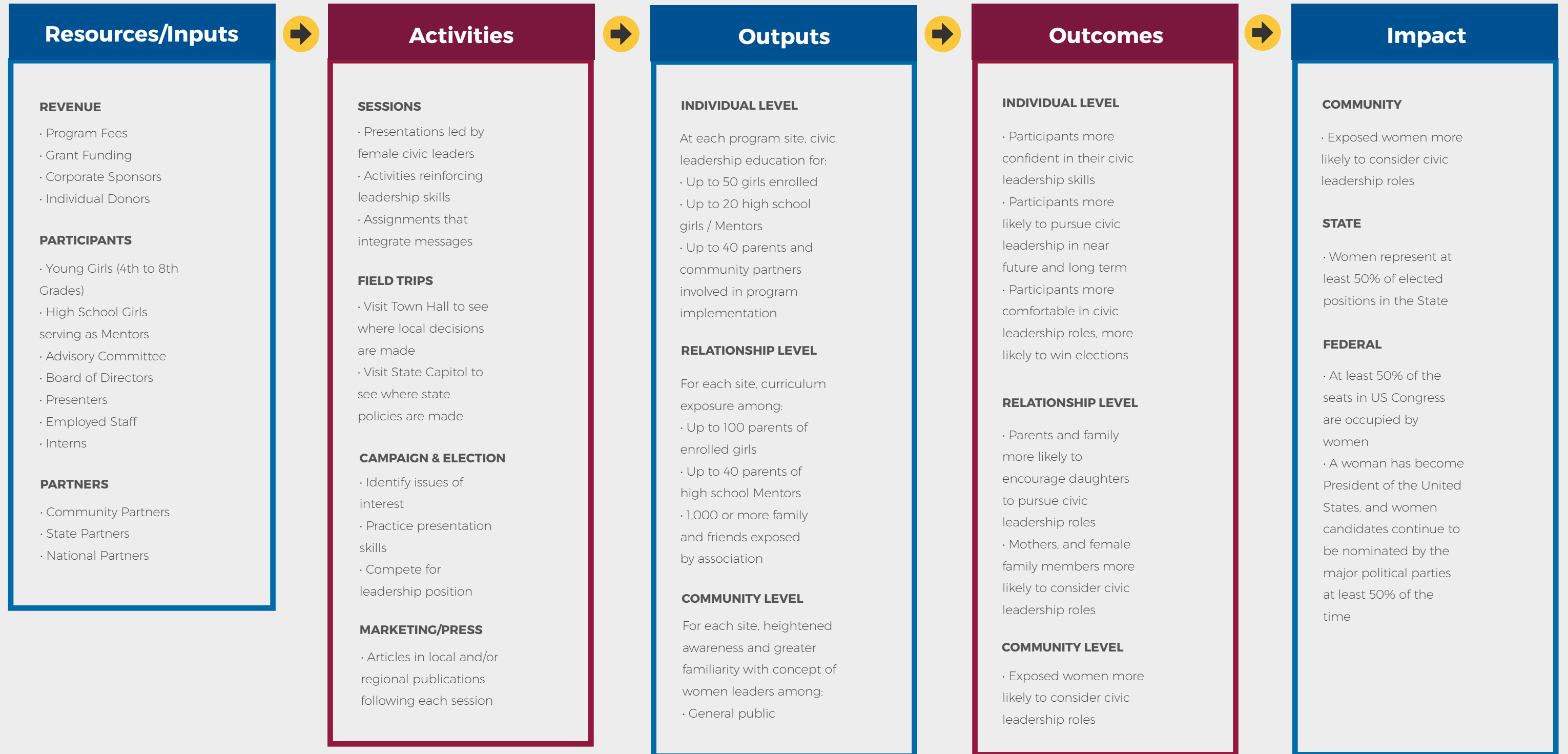


We had participants
and winners from
across Connecticut:

- Danbury
- Easton
- Hamden
- Norwalk
- Old Saybrook
- Ridgefield
- Stamford
- Trumbull
- Westport
- Wilton

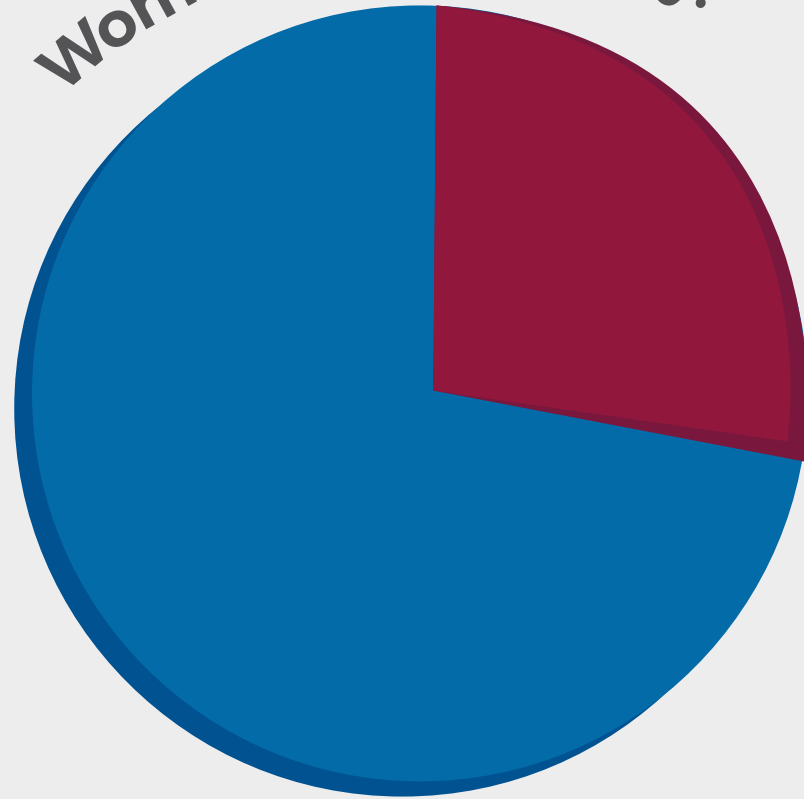


Our Logic Model



Why it Matters

Women make up only:



29%

of State Legislatures

18%

of Governors

24%

of Federal Government

Women tend to under-estimate their leadership potential while men are more likely to over-estimate their abilities.

Women are less likely to choose to run – they tend to run after being encouraged by others.

“Girls’ self-esteem peaks when they are 9 years old—then takes a nose dive.”

—Robin F. Goodman, Child Psychologist, NYU Child Study Center

When asked questions like...

“Are you confident?”

75% of 9-year-old girls respond with “Yes.”

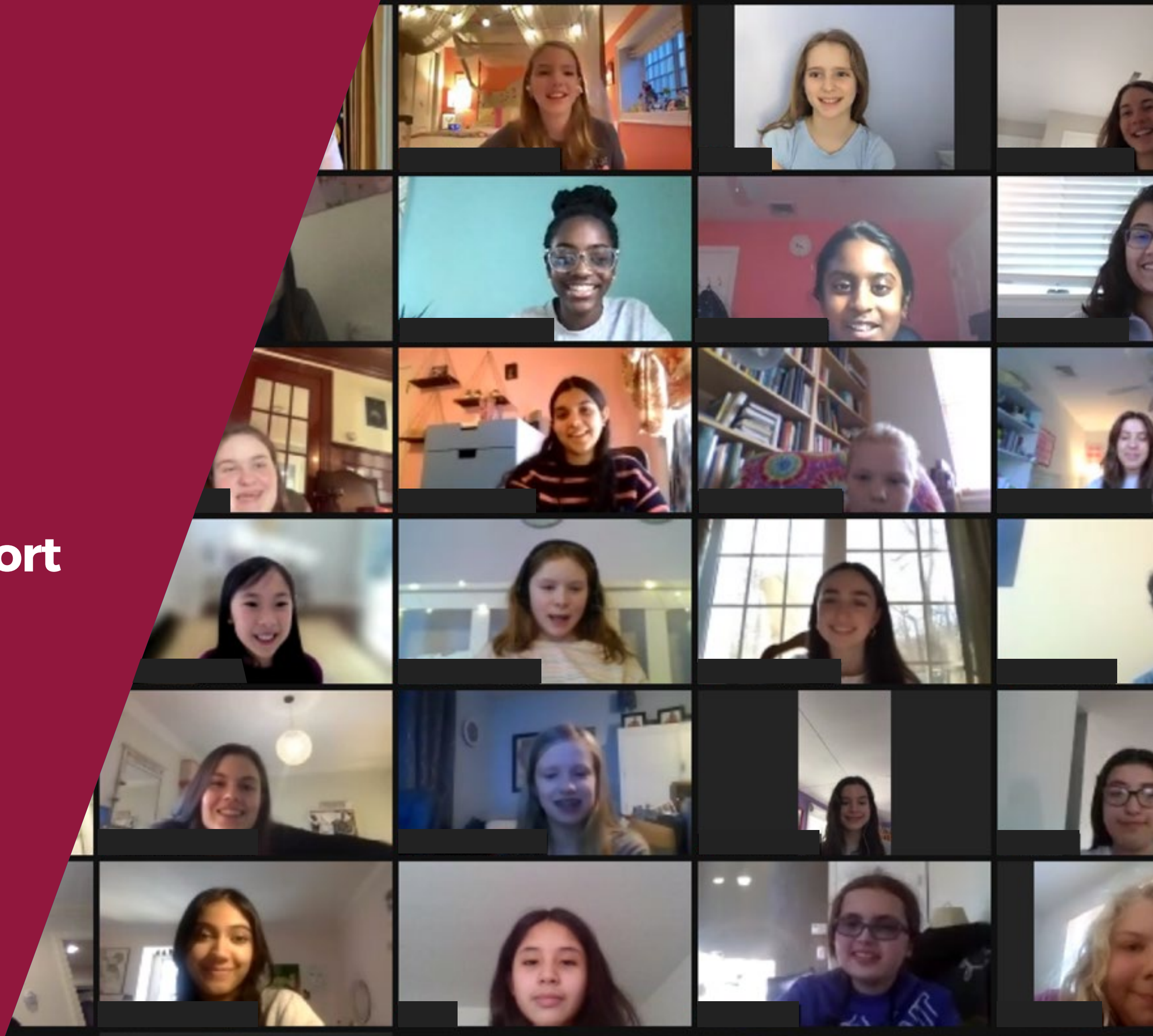
By age 12, that number

drops to 56%

Section

02

2020-2021 Report



Our Year in Review

- **1st Virtual Campaign and Election**
- "Girls Lead!" Video Challenge
- **40% of Participants on Full Scholarship**
- Wilton Chapter Created
- **Received \$9,550 in Grants**
- Updated Website by RPAC
- **Received \$4,475 in Registration Fees**
- Began Catchafire Partnership
- **100% Board of Directors Annual Appeal Participation**
- Created Speaker Highlights Video
- **Created Alumnae Video**
- Expanded Social Media Presence



\$8,105

Raised on **Giving Tuesday**

Doubled
Participation

Special Thanks to:



Largest Grant in 2020
Catchafire Sponsorship

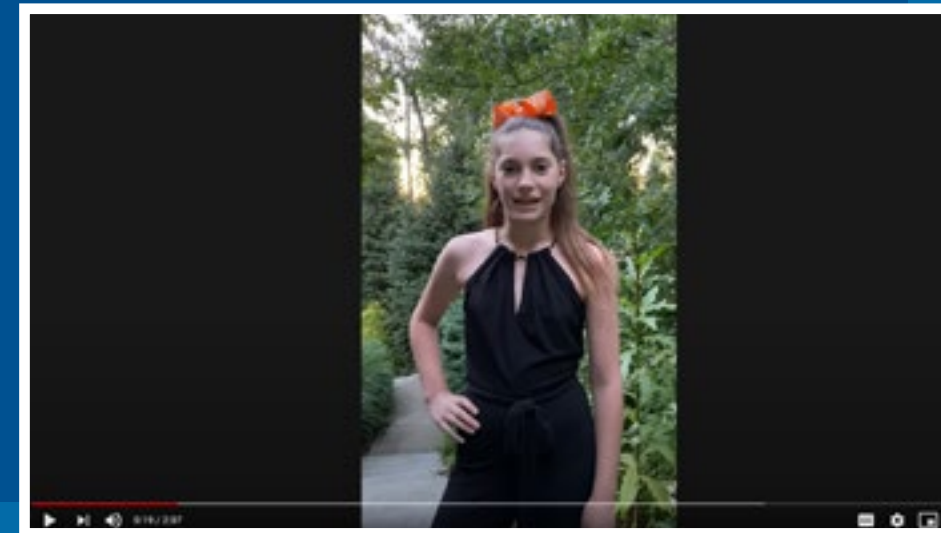
"Girls Lead!" Video Challenge

Congratulations to our winners!

Gopika

6TH GRADE

Hamden



Mirabel

7TH GRADE

Ridgefield

Speakers and Presenters



Activate Your Girl Power

Kim Mellin, *Director of the Wilton Historical Society*

Local Leaders

Lynne Vanderslice, *First Selectwoman (R/Wilton)*

Julia Pemberton, *First Selectwoman (D/Redding)*

State Leaders

Themis Klarides, *R House Minority Leader*

Mae Flexer, *D State Senator*

Finding Your Voice and Making it Matter

Liseli Haines and Buffy Curtis, *Quaker Activists*

Using Your Voice - Public Speaking

Kathryn Poindexter, *Founder, Campaign Greenhouse*

Using Your Voice - Public Speaking (Pt. II)

Ellie Carter, Eila Nambiar, and Kavya Anand,

Federal Leaders

Jahana Hayes, *R/Congresswoman 5th District of CT*

Annmarie Goyzueta, *Dir. of Operations for Rep. Hayes*

Communicating Your Issue!

Sarah Craven, *UNFPA, Director, Washington DC*



“If there’s an issue that you’re really passionate about... there’s an opportunity to reach out, to be aggressive, to have your voice heard.”

Mae Flexer, CT State Senate

“...if you care deeply about something... Enter the conversation. Be fearless and do things on your own terms.”

Jahana Hayes (US Rep for the 5th District)



“You may not succeed at everything you do. And that’s OK. You don’t know what you really have passion for unless you give it a try.”

Themis Klarides, House Minority Leader

2021 Winners



Rosy & Stephany
"GIRLS UNITE!"
Danbury



Maggie
EDUCATION
Ridgefield



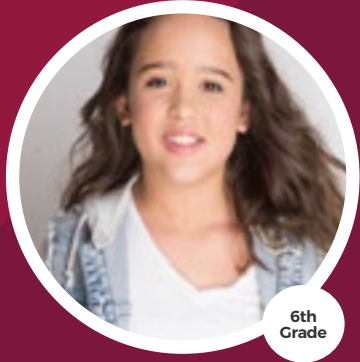
Elyse
LITTERING
Wilton



Gopika
FEMINISM
Hamden



Maura & Kyela
NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY
Old Saybrook



Hannah-Sophia
DIVERSITY
Trumbull



Eva
"SAVING THE PLANET -
ONE BITE AT A TIME"
Westport



Brie
ANIMAL RIGHTS
Gilbert

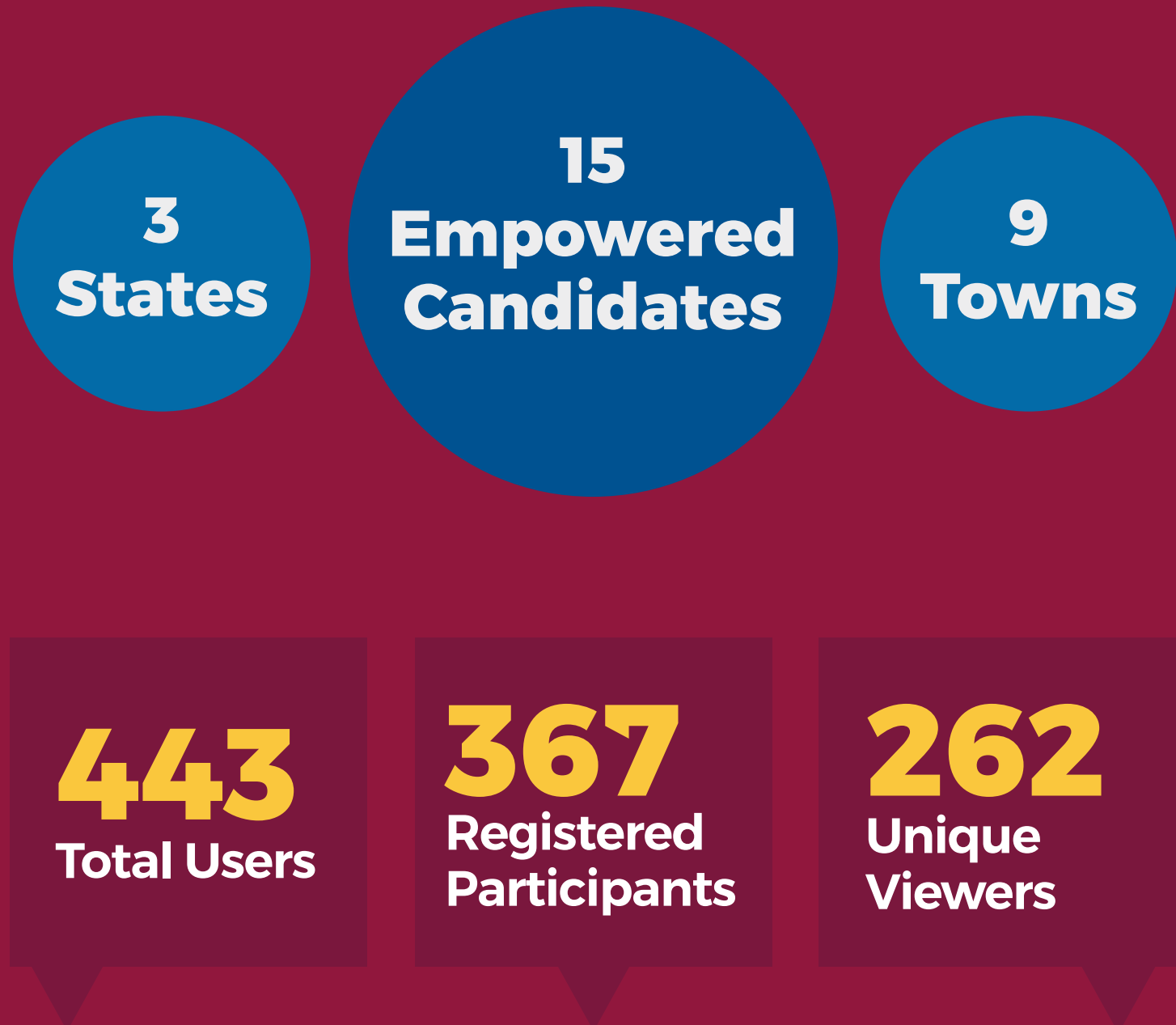


Addy
AUTISM
Murray



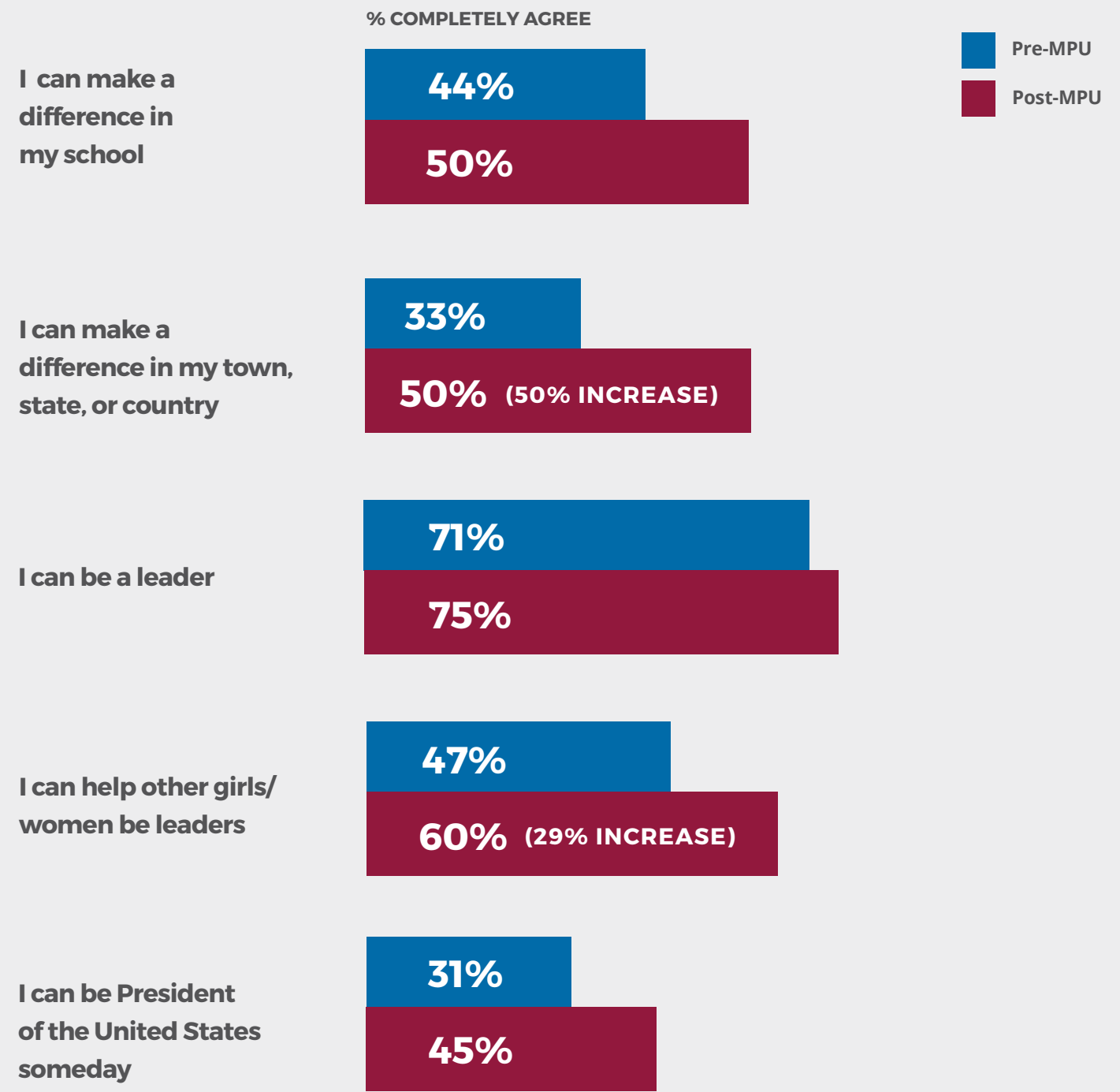
Click above to watch our virtual election

Virtual Election Data



Program Outcomes

IMPACT ON PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT SHE CAN DO:



Where Are They Now?

Hersha, age 13, held a “hours without technology” event at the Ridgefield Boys and Girls Club in support of NAMI.

Brianna, age 11, continues to pursue an anti-bullying initiative in Danbury.



One winner has **started** her own nonprofit “Shared Empowerment.”

One has **organized** an annual powerful “PRIDE” day in a local park including speakers, music, prizes and a parade.

One has met with local officials and is **creating** a blueprint for Neighborhood Safety, including fundraising for the necessary stop sign accouterments.

One has been **invited** to give the convocation speech to all the teachers and administrators in her district.

One has **spoken** in front of the local board of selectmen and received permission to create a Townwide Cleanup Day complete with prizes and school engagement.



Ms President US Trumbull (Hannah-Sophia Grant) meeting with First Selectwoman Vicki Tesoro.



Old Saybrook First Selectman Carl Fortuna, Ms President US Old Saybrook Maura McGuire and her Vice President Kyela McGuire, and Old Saybrook Finance Director Lee Ann Palladino.



Ms President US
A Girls' Civic Leadership Program