

Massiel Tolentino

MCO 202-02

Prof. Robicheau

Interview with Maria Manzueta

In the office of Maria Manzueta, who is the Program Director for the School Aged Child Care program at Girls Inc of Lynn, the walls are covered in certificates listing off the many achievements she has had in her field. Girl's Inc is a non-profit that is dedicated to inspiring young girls to be strong, smart and bold and Manzueta has been apart of it for 37 years. There is a small jar filled with enticing mini candy bars that she offers to the girls who get sent up to her office. Photos of previous girls inc members smiling dot the walls and shelves, all of them having been touched by Manzeuta's work.

Question 1: Describe how you first started working at Girls Inc of Lynn.

Manzueta: I saw an ad that they had posted. And I said to myself "Ha! This is perfect." When I applied for the job, I didn't have much experience working with kids. But, then you know, they must've been desperate cause then they called me an hour later and gave me the job. They put me with another staff until I got the experience. I just said "That's fine." cause they'd pay me the same amount of money anyways. One day the person that I was working with got so upset after a girl threw a rock at him and quit on the spot. I had to stay with the group; And that was it.

Question 2: What do you like most about working with young girls in your community?

Manzueta: I like the philosophy: Women are capable of anything. Our culture tells us, It's the man that gives orders. I was brought up in Dominican culture that encourages a woman being submissive. I've never been the kind of person to listen to anybody anyway. So I think I rebelled. It's my thing to teach girls that they can do anything that they want. They can get an education and grow up to be independent, smart members of society. . I have always lived in this neighborhood. I know how much it was needed...I know how much the girls need this program to teach them that they can grow up to be self-sufficient.

I like when girls come back to me all grown up and tell me about how they got into college, got married, had kids or got a dream job. It makes me deeply proud and that's why I'm still here and why I'll be here until I retire.

Question 3: What do you miss about being in your other roles at Girls Inc.

Manzueta: Being more hands on with the girls. I mean any opportunity that I have to be with the girls more I will take it. I've prepared little boxes with all kinds of activities for all different ages for when we were short of staff so that I am able to cover a group. I miss the exchanges with the girls and being more hands on working with them.

Question 4: Bouncing off the last question, what do you like about your role now?

Manzueta: Well I like it because I can make a difference. Before I used to make a difference in the girls' lives, now I make a difference in the staff's lives. You get an education here...Here you get to know what you want to do in life...Do I want to work with children ? Or do I want to be in a more administrative position or do I want to be something completely different. You get the skills that you need to be responsible and organized. To plan programs, to write and be creative. Even being here for a year teaches program coordinators skills that they can use in the future and to be whatever they want to do... I want to be supportive so their experience can take them beyond Girls Inc.

Question 6: Where do you see yourself in five years?

Manzueta: Retired and traveling. So, I am 66 ½ and I'm not planning another career after here so that's why I'm still here. I would like to still volunteer as a tutor here a few times a month if that would be possible. I would also like to volunteer with Saint Judes hospital for Children because I have done some work with them in the past. Overall, I'd still like to stay active in this kind of non-profit work because I love it so much. I would definitely still want to have some involvement in Girls Inc activities.

