



## **Business Viewpoint: Erin Bender Daily: Invest in leadership training for girls**

By [ERIN BENDER DAILY](#) Business Viewpoint | Posted: Thursday, April 3, 2014 12:00 am

It is a sad truth that many of the world's challenges have a disproportionate impact on women. Poverty, hunger, homelessness ... these are some of the issues that women face at far greater rates than men, and I have seen the real-life impact of these inequities while working with at-risk youth right here in Tulsa. I've met too many kids who come from single-mother households and get a square meal only on the days they come to school, and heard too many children speak of witnessing the domestic abuse of their mothers.

My experiences have convinced me that we need more women in leadership roles if we want to make a change - in businesses, nonprofits, and in government. It's not that I believe that men don't care about the issues that disproportionately affect women - they do - but the reality is that these social problems impact women in greater numbers and women are in a strong position to reach out, to empathize, to understand, and to effect change.

One powerful example of a woman who has overcome poverty and emerged a leader is Liz Murray, best-selling author of *Breaking Night*. Following her mother's death, Murray was homeless at age 15, but found the courage not only to complete high school, but to graduate from Harvard University.

It is fitting that Murray will be sharing her story in Tulsa at the Juliette Low Leadership Society luncheon on April 9 since the event's proceeds benefit Girl Scouts of Eastern Oklahoma.

Girl Scouts has a proven track record of community outreach and developing leadership in girls. In a state that incarcerates more women per capita than any other, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars helps girls develop and sustain healthy relationships with their incarcerated mothers.

And the program works. Since its implementation more than 10 years ago, not one girl in the program has been incarcerated in the state of Oklahoma.

Regarding leadership, more than two thirds of women serving in the U.S. Congress, 80 percent of women business owners were Girl Scouts, and almost all of the female astronauts. Girl Scout alumnae are more likely to vote, perform community service as an adult, and earn a college degree. Considering that only 1 in 7 Oklahoma girls complete four years of college while 1 in 3

Girl Scout alumnae earn a college degree, investing in girls' leadership could have an enormous impact on our state.

I encourage you to take a straw poll of your colleagues: how many were Girl Scouts and how has it impacted their lives? I also encourage you to consider attending the Juliette Low Leadership Society luncheon on April 9 to hear from Liz Murray. I know her story will illustrate how important it is for our community to invest in our girls. After all, where do the women leaders of tomorrow come from? Girls, of course.

To learn more about Girl Scouts and the Juliette Low Leadership Society, visit [www.gseok.org/JLLS](http://www.gseok.org/JLLS)

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Erin Bender Daily is a civil litigation attorney and shareholder in the Tulsa law firm GableGotwals. She also serves as a committee member for the Girl Scouts - Juliette Low Leadership Society.