

Girl Power

In today's world, although career opportunities for women in male-dominated fields have increased dramatically, it is still challenging for many women to achieve their dreams of advancing in these fields if they do not have the appropriate leadership skills and abilities. One may notice that even though 51% of the population is comprised of women, only 22.8% of elected offices in the United States of America are occupied by women.¹ Three major skills women need to progress in any field include leadership, innovation, and integrity.

One woman who demonstrated all of these skills is Susan Benton, who is currently in her third term as sheriff in Highlands County, Florida. She is a strong, determined woman who has approached problems with new ideas and is not afraid to take risks. As sheriff, Benton invited the community to assist in certain aspects of the police force, created a program to help protect the elderly, and invented a way for prisoners to be rehabilitated while still being held accountable for their actions. She was able to do all of this because of the intangible skills that she developed early in life. These same characteristics are often not formally developed in young women in girls.

With 1,000,000 dollars, I would create programs and clubs for girls to grow these skills. Currently, there are few clubs specifically tailored for girls that teach leadership skills, innovation, or integrity. I would establish new clubs and required activities targeting young girls that specifically incorporate leadership or innovation. These clubs could allow girls to assist with school-directed activities, develop innovative service projects that aim to solve specific community problems, and participate in self-assessment activities. I would also create an elective class that girls could choose to take at school about leading in positive and encouraging ways

¹ <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/helping-girls-unlock-leadership-potential-anne-obrien>

that would pair girls with strong female leaders at their school for mentoring. Different programs such as these could have a large payout in the long run by cultivating and reinforcing positive behavioral characteristics.

Preparing girls for their future by equipping them with leadership skills, integrity, and the ability to innovate would not only help them in jobs that require leadership, but would be beneficial in other everyday situations, such as parenting. There are many times when a parent needs to think on their feet or lead their children to make right decisions. In this way, leadership training for girls has long term benefits no matter what path in life that she chooses.

By applying her leadership skills and ability to develop innovative solutions while maintaining her integrity, Susan Benton has had a significant impact on Highlands County. Her actions have not only led to important improvements in her community and an increase in female representation in the Sheriff's Office, but they also serve as an example for young women throughout Florida. Developing diverse programs such as clubs, activities, and electives that cultivate these skills and abilities in young girls would have tremendous value in our society.