

# Menstrual Care Products and Educational Sessions

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## Introduction

I addressed the lack of access to feminine hygiene products and menstrual care education in Alabama middle schools. The monthly costs of products such as pads and tampons can be especially burdensome for girls who come from financially struggling families, especially during Covid-19. I spoke to Girls Inc of Central Alabama President and CEO Dr. Connie Hill and her staff as well as school counselors at Jones Valley and Huffman middle schools to learn about the needs of their students and how I could help address them.

“More than half of girls lose confidence during puberty, with the onset of menstruation marking the lowest point confidence. One of the key reasons for this is a lack of information. Two out of every three girls who enter puberty don’t know enough about what is happening to their bodies.”

<https://always.com/en-us/about-us/empowering-girls-through-education-with-always>

“Even in the U.S., poor women often can't afford tampons, pads.” Some states impose a high tax rate on feminine hygiene products. It is especially hard for those who live paycheck to paycheck. Women may have to choose between spending money for food vs. sanitary products.

Source: Reuters

( <https://mobile.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKCN1P42TX>)

## Impact

- Provided 2 feminine hygiene dispensers and 6 boxes of pad refills with 250 pads per box, among Girls Inc, Jones Valley middle school and Huffman middle school.
- Taught 64 girls about menstrual care. By end of sessions, girls used words such as “strong,” “pretty,” “nice” to describe themselves.
- Of the girls who filled out post-surveys,
  - 82% gave ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-pt scale for session helpfulness
  - 79% gave ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-pt scale for how comfortable they were with periods after the sessions
- Provided 31 menstrual care kits
- Provided printed handouts and list of resources for girls and their families
- Provided the menstrual care curriculum to Girls Inc staff, and counselors at Jones Valley, and Huffman middle schools so they can continue using it for future classes.



*Left: Pad dispenser installed at Jones Valley*

*Middle: Tanya with Dr. Connie Hill*

*Right: Dr. Hoover as guest speaker at Jones Valley*

## Critical Assessment

One challenge was ensuring that a feminine hygiene dispenser was installed at Girls Inc by the company I was working with. While they delivered the pad refills on time, the dispenser was on backorder. It became stressful as the delivery date became repeatedly delayed. Each time I called, I kept getting bounced to different company representatives. I set time aside in my schedule to call the company every couple of days to request the status of the order. In the end, the dispenser was delivered to Girls Inc. They even provided free installation of the dispenser, which is a service they don’t usually provide. I learned that persistence and patience pay off. I also understood that some things such as product delivery dates are out of my control. However, I used different strategies to speed up the process such as reminder phone calls and emails.

Some menstrual education sessions had to be rescheduled during COVID surges at middle schools and with guest speakers being sick. My mentor Dr. Hoover helped find other OB-GYN healthcare speakers for the new dates in addition to coming as a guest speaker herself at multiple sessions. ASF provided me with amazing mentors who helped me troubleshoot problems that arose.

The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship allowed me the opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. As a result of the experience I gained, I will continue to identify and assess needs in my community and approach complex issues with a problem-solving mindset. As a future healthcare professional, I plan to always put patients’ specific needs first to ensure I provide the best possible care.

## Acknowledgements

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Thank you Dr. Connie Hill for all of your guidance and support as my community site mentor at Girls Inc!

Thank you Kristin Boggs for everything that you do to support our projects and encourage our growth!

## Logic Model

### Outcomes

- My goal was to provide feminine hygiene products (pads and dispensers) and work with Girls Inc to create a model for providing women’s health education to girls entering puberty for use at Girls Inc and at Birmingham middle schools serving underserved communities

### Outputs

- Goal of at least 50 girls attending sessions
- Post-sessions survey
- How girls describe themselves and periods in 1 word
- Fundraise money for supplies

### Activities

- Provide pad dispensers and refills to Girls Inc and middle schools
- Sessions about puberty and first periods
- Hands-on make your own menstrual care kit sessions
- OBGYN guest speaker sessions
- Sessions were interactive with Q/A from students to keep them engaged

### Inputs

- Total service hours: 212.5. Direct service hours: 104. Indirect service hours: 108.5
- Designed and implemented menstrual care curriculum for middle school girls in different grades
- Guest OBGYN speakers: Dr. Kimberly Hoover, Dr. Amy Boone, Dr. Blair Lacy.
- Bought materials (different sizes of pads, deodorant, hand sanitizer, bag, etc) for putting together menstrual care kits