

TIME FOR A ROAD TRIP



STEVEN VALENTI REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Girls get into a new donated van at Save Girls on FYER in Waterbury on Tuesday. The group used grant money to buy a van the agency will use to address the emotional and physical needs of young, inner city girls.

New van will help agency show girls another world

THE GIRLS climbed one by one into the parked van, bound for an activity inner city youth rarely get an opportunity to participate in — sailing and kayaking lessons.

Even though they may not grow up to be sailors or paddling enthusiasts, they knew there was a greater purpose behind their educational trip.

“It forces you to talk with new people and not just stave



MIKE PATRICK
CITY BEAT

with the same people all the time,” 15-year-old Mia Nartey said.

“All in all, it’s a new experience,” Ana Coyanda-Parkzes, 13, said. “It’s pushing you out of your comfort zone. rather

than just sailing itself.”

To embrace new experiences and seize opportunities to grow are tenets behind the programming at Save Girls on FYER, which provides mentoring and enrichment for inner city girls ages 11 to 17.

The acronym stands for “Future Young Educated Role model.”

The agency will be able to grow its programs, including trips such as this one to the Quassy Sailing Center, thanks to a \$35,000 grant from the

Elisha Leavenworth Foundation that helped purchase a van for transportation.

“The main purpose of us getting this grant is, besides field trips, to get our girls outside of Waterbury and outside of their normal environment,” said Jacquée Porter, founder of Save Girls on FYER.

“College tours is one of our big things; to let them explore a lot of different col-

See **BUS**. Page **5B**



STEVEN VALENTI REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Girls get into a new donated van at Save Girls on FYER in Waterbury on Tuesday.

BUS: Free transportation

“A lot of families can’t travel outside of Waterbury and a lot of children don’t know resources other than what they see here.”

The van will also be used to transport the 26 girls enrolled at Save Girls on Fyer to a number of different summer camp programs outside of Waterbury that provided scholarships for them.

Some 50 other families not involved with the agency will receive free transportation to camps outside of the city as well, she said.

The girls involved in the organization’s Leadership Academy and subsequent Liberation on Fire group, both of which encourage community service and volunteerism, will be transported by the van to those various

opportunities throughout the city, she said.

“In the future, as we develop our program more, it is to bring our program outside of the four walls and to go into different communities and maybe offer our services at local recreation centers,” she said.

Cathy Smith, president of the Elisha Leavenworth Foundation, said the charitable organization knew of Porter’s work in the community, and donated the money for the van after learning more about its scope.

“Jackie came to our meeting and presented us with her work,” which is such a compelling story,” Smith said. “Our mission is Waterbury youth, education and culture in Waterbury. This is basic-

ly our mission which she’s doing. We really want to learn more about this program and the work she does, because the outreach has been incredible.”

She praised Porter for identifying and addressing a specific need.

“I think this is a really unique niche,” she said. “She’s targeted young women in stressful situations and talking about opportunities — education, cultural, enrichment opportunities that they wouldn’t have had.”

For more information, visit www.savegirlsonfyer.org.

Contact Mike Patrick at mpatrick@rep-am.com, on Twitter @RA_MikePatrick or on Facebook at RA.Mike.Patrick.