

# Missionettes changes name, broadens focus

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY CHRISTINA QUICK



Girls Ministries leaders react to the name change at the national conference.



National Girls Ministries will continue to support Missionettes curriculum.



After more than half a century of ministry to girls, Missionettes is changing its image.

The Assemblies of God's Missionettes Ministries Department recently became National Girls Ministries (NGM). In addition, Missionettes Girls Clubs is now known as M'pact Girls Clubs.

The changes took effect March 15 during the national Missionettes conference in Springfield, Mo.

The identity shift is about more than new program titles, according to Candy Tolbert, National Girls Ministries director. She says the ministry focus is broadening in response to changing times.

"As with the rest of the world, our church culture is undergoing quantum changes," Tolbert says. "These emerging trends, issues and needs are making a tremendous impact on girls ministries as we know it, and if we are to remain relevant, we must also be willing to adjust to the times."

Plans are in place to provide

more resources to help parents and leaders address contemporary issues. NGM also plans to place a greater emphasis on ministry to teen girls and offer a new optional line of curriculum that is not award-based.

Tolbert emphasizes the name change to M'pact Girls Clubs will not require churches to buy new curriculum and support materials. The clubs will continue to be Rainbows, Daisies, Prims, Stars, Friends and Girls Only. As materials and products are reprinted and reproduced, they will reflect the name change of the overall ministry. Churches should continue to use the curriculum already in place and use the new ministry name in promotional pieces and when advertising events.

The award-based programs will remain largely the same. The optional line of curriculum being developed will offer an alternative for clubs that choose not to pursue traditional award tracks, such as the Honor Star program.

Gay Wall, Georgia District children's ministries director, says

she welcomes the change.

"Some girls are very competitive and want the awards," Wall says. "Others just want to be a part of something and enjoy the fellowship. However we reach them, our intention is to get God's Word in their hearts. That's where our focus needs to be."

Awilda Reyes, coordinator for the Southeastern Spanish District, says the program needed more flexibility to meet the needs of girls from diverse cultural backgrounds.

"The way you teach someone born in the United States is different from the way you teach those coming from Central America," Reyes says. "They may not be into awards and things like that, but they still need to be taught and mentored."

Tolbert says the changing approaches are a response to declining church participation in Missionettes as well as cultural challenges affecting today's girls. A variety of supplemental materials will help teachers and parents navigate some of the is-

suues that are new to today's generation.

"Girls are walking into our clubrooms on Wednesday night talking about things we wish we didn't have to talk about," Tolbert says.

Programs for teens will be under a separate heading called Teen Girl Ministries. Tolbert says this represents a move toward developing more targeted resources for adolescents and the specific issues they face. NGM's first new venture for ministry to teen girls is "1 Girl," a resource packet now in development.

Julie Payne, a Missionettes coordinator at First Assembly of God in Rome, Ga., says answers to contemporary questions are desperately needed, especially when young girls are seeking significance on Web-based social networking sites.

"We have a lot of kids on MySpace," Payne says. "What are they really doing with that, and what can we do to make sure they're safe? We need resources to help us work through

some of those issues."

Mary Dotson, Missionettes coordinator for the Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District, says she has been concerned about the increasing number of girls who are developing eating disorders.

"Starting as early as second grade, girls are worried about diet and body image," Dotson says. "We need to help small local churches address this."

Wall says the Georgia District already has started placing a greater emphasis on teen girls, many of whom have abandoned Missionettes in recent years. The district recently appointed consultants specifically for Friends and Girls Only, the junior high and high school clubs.

"We're seeing girls on medication — everything from Ritalin to psychiatric drugs," Wall says. "Many of these kids just need to feel wanted. The church needs to be ready to respond."

Charles Crabtree, assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, says NGM is heading in the right direction with these changes.

"I see Missionettes as moving from den mothers to care providers," Crabtree says. "The needs are so vast that unless we have broader designations of ministry, we're going to miss some of these girls."

To see NGM's strategic plan and answers to frequently asked questions, visit the National Girls Ministries Web site at [ngm.ag.org](http://ngm.ag.org). **tpe**

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