SOHO Space of Her Own

Artful mentorship and leadership for women and girls.

SOHO’s mission is to give each participant unique, hands-on art experiences in order to cultivate a positive view of her future along with the motivation and ability to be strong, confident and creative leaders.

We all need a place where we can feel safe and valued in our community. We need positive role models and opportunities to create. We are never too young or old to explore what we can become in life.

ABOUT SOHO

SOHO takes place at the Visual Art Center of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. SOHO’s program provides twelve 6th grade girls who live in public housing and twelve early career women in the Richmond community an opportunity to expand their leadership and make a difference in each other’s lives. SOHO is an art-based mentoring program that supports some of Richmond’s girls most in need through our partnership with Anna Julie Cooper Episcopal School (AJCES). The program also provides intensive leadership and mentorship training for the women who serve as mentors.

For one year “big sisters” and “little sisters” experience leadership and life skills training together through mentoring and artistic exploration. These pairs experience a combination of hands-on arts education with life-skills exploration. Through these shared experiences, the women and girls of SOHO expand the way they see and engage in relationships, transforming their spaces and lives both inside and out.

At the close of the program in May, the teams use the decorative and functional artwork they created to makeover the bedroom spaces for each girl – creating a literal space of her own inside their homes, the majority of which are public housing. Together, they create colorful, inspiring spaces where girls can study, rest, and dream.

The first SOHO: Space of Her Own program at VisArts began in the fall of 2008. Since that time the program has affected the lives of over 140 women and girls, with over 70 bedrooms transformed.

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Girl Talk & Arts Education

Each Thursday night at SOHO, teams spend three hours together. They explore a variety of media to create functional and decorative pieces for their room makeovers. Girls and mentors learn wheelthrowing, glazing, raku firing, darkroom photography, woodworking, woodburning, letterpress, collage, bookbinding, silkscreening, soldering, hoola hoop making, painting, sewing, fabric dying, etc.

Each week, a small group alternates between photography and Girl Talk for the first hour of the night. Girl Talk combines fun, artful activities with life-lessons. Each week focuses on a different topic like getting to know each other, team work, trust, communication, confidence, identifying strengths and values, empathy, kindness, friendship, conflict resolution, managing emotions, coping strategies, and goal setting.

Women's Leadership and Mentorship Training

The SOHO program not only provides women and girls the chance to form important friendships and explore art-making together, but it also gives mentors a unique curriculum centered around women’s leadership and quality mentoring.

Once a month over the course of SOHO, big sisters will meet on Friday afternoons for half-day workshops. These sessions will focus on a variety of interrelated topics surrounding the concepts of mentorship, authentic leadership and how the two relate to each other. This curriculum provides a place for these women to apply their leadership training to their personal lives and careers while simultaneously providing them with the tools they’ll need to be excellent mentors to their little sisters.

These training sessions will be given by guest speakers who are experts in their field. VisArts is proud to be partnered with the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute at VCU, who will aid VisArts in continuing to improve this experience for our mentors.

Funding & Support for SOHO

SOHO is generously supported each year through grants, individual donations, corporate sponsorships and in-kind donations from community businesses and organizations. Past support includes Altria, Dominion, Capital One, Luck Companies Foundation, The Golden Rule Foundation, Lipman Foundation, Health Diagnostics Laboratories, Plaza Art Supply and U-Fab.