Learning to go it alone

Independent projects let girls make a mark in the real world

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Going to school is one thing, but learning to survive in the "real" world is a different way of life. Teachers and parents can only teach so much, and the rest - learning how to fend for yourself, living on your own, cooking your own food -- you have to figure out and learn on your own. That is why La Pietra-Hawaii School for Girls created a way to help girls get acquainted with the pressures, workload and rigors of life after high school, as well as explore as-yet-unrevealed areas of personal interest.

Every year, the junior class undertakes an independent project, for which each girl has to complete 40 hours of work on a project of their choice. The independent project may involve developing an interest or talent, or giving of oneself in the service of others.

Some past examples of independent projects include learning how to fly a helicopter, writing a cookbook, writing and presenting a play in American Sign Language, writing a book of original poetry, volunteering at a homeless shelter and volunteering as a candy striper, working at the humane society, interning in a veterinarian's office, coaching younger students in sports, working in an orphanage in Peru, helping to build a Habitat for Humanity house, understudying a KCC chef and demonstrating haute cuisine.
preparation, presenting a fashion show of originally designed garments modeled by classmates, writing and illustrating a children's book, writing a science fiction novel, working with animals and giving tours at the Honolulu Zoo, teaching a faculty member to ride a horse and retraining an injured horse to jump again after veterinarians said it would never jump again.

A parent or teacher cannot teach a student the lessons that come about with the completion of an independent project. This project forces girls to step out of their comfort zones and to try something they have always wanted to do but have not had the confidence or opportunity to try before.

With the completion of their project, girls come away with new skills and the confidence to be strong, active women who positively influence their communities.

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