



Jeanne Flood

Volunteer

SHINE
THE
LIGHT

Jeanne Flood doesn't need a slogan or movement to remind her of the unlimited capacity to achieve that's within every girl. She's witness to it through her volunteer work with The Little Bit Foundation and at Marian Middle School, the only all-girls, faith-based, private middle school in the St. Louis community serving urban adolescent youth. "These girls are pushing barriers," says Flood.

The Richmond Heights mother of three began a weekly routine as a Little Bit school rep when her last child started college in 2016. Introduced to the organization by her college friend, Little Bit Board member Susan Gausnell, Flood spent her first year at Highland Elementary but switched to Yeatman-Liddell Middle School the next year believing it to be a better fit. She knew pretty well the unique needs of young people just developing into adults and had learned how to communicate with them in her previous five years volunteering at Marian.



It was in 2011 after her first child – her only daughter – headed off to college that she found her way to Marian Middle School. "I realized I needed girls in my life," she says, "and so I began helping out at Marian at the suggestion of a friend." A regular presence at Marian's after-school enrichment program, Flood was eventually approached by a

student's mother who wanted to start a Girl Scout troop and looking for support. After a first year that was "just okay," Flood says she was asked to take over. "My daughter was active in the Girl Scouts so I saw the benefits and knew it could fill a void at Marian, but I'd never been a troop leader. I figured the girls and I would learn together."



The troop of 10 girls meets every week, plans field trips, organizes service projects and raises money to attend summer camp

at Camp Tuckahoe near Troy, MO. "We're definitely a unique group among the other troops, but it's not long before all the girls are engaging and having fun together – just being girls – without thought to their different economic backgrounds."

While they still require guidance, she says, Flood has nothing but admiration for Marian students. "They're intelligent, in fact identified as high potential, with a parent or parents that are deeply involved. I see so much hope for these girls and they are getting the tools they need for academic success through Marian – even beyond middle school." Flood describes a Marian student she met in sixth grade who is now a junior at St. Joseph's Academy. She continues to help out at the Girl Scout camp each year and talks about becoming a lawyer. "She is going far," says Flood.

Flood stays in contact with many of the girls, with whom she's developed a "true friendship," she says, and also has become friends with many of the moms and other relatives. "It makes me sad the state of race relations in St. Louis, because I've had the benefit of seeing all of the things we have in common. Everyone wants their kids to be healthy and happy," says Flood.

The key to better understanding, she says, is education and communication. "I can honestly say I've learned as much from the students – about acceptance and compassion – as maybe they've learned from me."