



The Links, Incorporated is an international organization of more than 17,000 professional women of African descent in 299 chapters located in 41 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and the United Kingdom. Founded in 1946, it is one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of women who are committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the cultural and economic survival of African Americans and other persons of African ancestry.

The **Plano North Metroplex (TX) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated** was founded in 1989 by 33 dynamic women and provides services in Collin County and the cities of Richardson and Garland. We are an organization committed to promoting and engaging in educational, civic, and intercultural activities to enrich the lives of our community. For over 30 years, we have built upon the national programmatic focus to provide programs in Services to Youth, The Arts, International Trends and Services, National Trends and Service, and Health and Human Services. After an extensive review of the needs our community, the organization determined that its programmatic efforts would target middle and high school girls to promote their academic development and increase their awareness of STEM Programs; support them in making better personal and behavioral choices, informed decisions, and healthier lifestyle options; and enhance their interest in the arts and other cultural programs. These are the goals of **Securing Wisdom and Grace (SWAG)**.

- **Securing Wisdom And Grace (S.W.A.G.)**

Since 2015, we have worked with girls in grades 6-12 to increase their self-esteem and to expose them to civic, cultural and global experiences. The monthly programs have included the Arts Centre of Plano, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, STEAM Summits, Texas Instruments "Girl Power", Cooper Health Institute, MLK Power Leadership Breakfast, Financial Literacy Summit, Minnie's Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity and Plano International Festival. Students who meet specific program criteria also participate in the bi-annual Educational Tours. In 2017, 14 girls traveled to New York City where they toured the United Nations, NYC monuments such as the 9-11 Ground Zero; and attended a Broadway play. In 2019, the tour focused on the State of Texas and students toured the State Capital, the LBJ Library, the Alamo and visited Baylor University.

In March 2020, twelve students visited Washington, DC, touring the White House, the Nation's Capital, The African American Museum, Howard University, and The Links



Corporate Office where they met the National President of The Links, Incorporated.

- **NSBE Jr. (National Society of Black Engineers)** – The program was initiated in 2019 to increase our focus on STEM and to provide opportunities for both boys and girls to participate. An initiative of our national organization, this program exposes students to STEAM activities and careers, and encourages them to attend college and perhaps pursue technical degrees.
- **Mentoring Program** – Mentoring has been a fundamental tenet of our work and after a successful pilot program last summer, the program has been formalized and each participant in the SWAG Program is provided a mentor. Our goal is to develop trusting, purposeful relationships that help students grow into successful, healthy young women.
- **Scholarship Program** – Since 2019 we have granted \$30,000 annually in scholarships to high school and college students in our service area. These scholarships have supported deserving students, especially those from under-represented groups in our community, to pursue their education and career goals. During the past 3 years, we have contributed \$25,000 in scholarships and donations to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's).
- **Parent Engagement** – From the inception of the program, parents have been actively engaged. A Parent Orientation is held at the beginning of each year (August) and it provides an opportunity for parents to learn about the goals of the program, proposed activities for the year, as well as student and parent expectations. Parents are invited to join their daughters for the annual Red Dress Luncheon where the focus is heart healthy living.
- **Community Partnerships** – Numerous community organizations have supported our work to achieve the program goals. They include Texas Instruments, Frito Lay, Collin County College, Toyota, and Telecom Electric Supply Company. Their financial and in-kind services enable us to sustain high quality educational and enrichment programs for the students in our community.

Following each program activity, participants are encouraged to complete evaluations, and over the years, students and others have consistently rated the programs as Highly Effective. In 2023, the Western Area of The Links, Incorporated awarded the program Second Place – Services to Youth in its ten-state region.

Plano North Metroplex Chapter members also receive service hours for participating in these activities. This year, members logged over 7000 hours of service. This demonstrates the organization's unwavering commitment to the community.

S.W.A.G. Logo

