

FALLS

Young girls learn to find 'The Babe Within'

Bucks County Commissioner Diane Marseglia Tuesday morning told the girls to talk to an adult if they feel stressed.

By **RACHEL CANELLI**
STAFF WRITER

If Emily McAnany had been asked her opinion in front of a room full of people several weeks ago, she'd have just kept it to herself because she was too shy to share.

But at the Lower Bucks Family YMCA in Falls Tuesday morning, not only was the 12-year-old confidently raising her hand to talk with a group of girls, she also was making her

new-found friends laugh with what she had to say.

That's because Emily has found the strength inside to be herself, thanks to "The Babe Within," a free eight-session program for 10- to 12-year-old girls.

"I used to be more introverted," said the soon-to-be seventh-grader at Pennwood Middle School. "I didn't feel like I was very important. But I broke out of my shell and I feel a lot better about myself."

A native of London, Lower Makefield resident Rupa Mohan created and founded the course this spring as part of a leadership class she's taking in Philadelphia.

The goal of the program is to

teach girls how to eat, energize, explore and make the most of who they are by helping them write in journals, participate in any movement like walking or dancing, and choose healthy snacks.

"There are so many media pressures on young girls to have a size zero and a boyfriend by 10," Mohan said before Tuesday's final session. "I think it's unnecessary. It's really important for them to be able to feel confident, happy with themselves and have good relationships."

Mohan said she hopes to continue the series and is looking for interested organizations and venues.

To help the girls celebrate

their final session, Bucks County Commissioner Diane Marseglia visited with them and told them not to be afraid to ask for help.

"We all look different," said Marseglia, who lost one of her two teenage daughters a few years ago to suicide. "But no matter who we are, we're the same inside. We all feel anger, sadness, joy, worry and have to make difficult choices. Everything passes, so don't run away."

Besides making changes in their everyday lives and being more adventurous, the girls said they also now understand that women can play different roles.

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EMILY MCANANY
PENNWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL
SEVENTH-GRADER

want," said 11-year-old Sharon Grey. "It doesn't have to be about other people. Before, I was scared that no one would like me. Now, I feel happy."

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