

**DOUG
MOE**

Changing what it means to be a girl

The notes and calls come from all over now.

There's one girl in Texas, she's 14, and she texts or talks to Kelly Parks Snider every week. She wants to start her own Project Girl group, and nothing is going to stand in her way.

"She's a rock star," Parks Snider was saying last week.

The mere fact that word is getting out about Project Girl — a Madison-based initiative founded in 2005 by Parks Snider and her friend Jane Bartell — is in itself a victory.

The project began in the first place because two Madison moms met and discovered themselves mutually dismayed by the media and cultural message bombarding young girls at seemingly every turn: You can never be too skinny, and you can never spend too much money at the mall.

It was more complicated than that, but there it was. Fighting the conventional wisdom — girls will be girls — was like fighting city hall.

Next month, word that there is more to adolescence and teen life than that — the word according to Project Girl — will get its biggest boost yet when Parks Snider, Bartell and Project Girl are featured in the November issue of Family Circle magazine, with a readership in the millions.

"They found us," Bartell said, when I met the co-founders for coffee at the Monroe Street Barriques last week and asked how

the forthcoming article had come to be.

They've come a long way since 2003, the year Bartell, a Madison native, and Parks Snider, who is from Omaha, first met. Jane's son and Kelly's daughter are the same age and the women met through school.