

# Girls and Women Shine at Annual Celebration

By Julia Park

Alameda women and girls were the stars at the Girls, Inc. fourth annual Celebration of Excellence luncheon, celebrating "Women Who Dare" held May 3. As Samarial Brown, chair of the event committee and mistress of ceremonies for the event declared, "Everything we do here is for the girls."

The luncheon was planned to honor several local women and girls for their achievements. Honorees included Janice Lee, a local volunteer and investment representative; Bernida Reagan, director of social responsibility at the Port of Oakland; Jill Ottaviano, an officer of the Alameda Police Department; Sara Heaps, an Encinal High School student who won the Bay Area Science Fair two years in a row; and Mia Kabasakalis, a home-schooled eighth-grader who is a reporter for *Time for Kids* magazine.

Girls from the Meyers House program read aloud proclamations and congratulatory letters sent by Congressman Pete Stark, Assemblywoman Wilma Chan and Alameda County Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker. Mayor Beverly Johnson declared May 3 National Girls' Day in Alameda.

Lee, as the keynote speaker, told how important it was for her to have mentors in all her endeavors. "I always sought out a role model, someone who could guide me professionally, socially and emotionally." She named several famous strong women as inspirations, including Eleanor Roosevelt, and named women close to her who have taught her

valuable life lessons. "Sometimes we need to become women who dare, to go out on a limb because that's where the fruit is. Success is finding and doing to the best of your ability in each moment of your life what you do best," said Lee.

She advised the girls of Girls, Inc. in their future endeavors to "Get out of the backseat of someone else's car and get

behind the wheel."

Reagan said she enjoyed being interviewed by the young girls at Girls, Inc. in preparation for the awards event, and said, "It's clear that they are doing some wonderful work at Girls, Inc."

Ottaviano earned cheers and laughter when she showed off

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Photo by Julia Park

Young members of Girls, Inc. read proclamations from elected officials at last Saturday's Celebration of Excellence luncheon.