

## **Girls Inc.**

Sade is a sweet, quiet eight-year-old. She lives with her mom, her brothers, and a little sister, all under the age of six. When the pandemic hit, Sade's cousin was killed in a car wreck and another family member was severely injured. Sade's mom quickly stepped up and took it upon herself to care for the remaining family in her home. During the height of the pandemic, as mom and family drove to Girls Inc. regularly to pick up food, supplies and activity kits, we noticed the toll the stress was taking on mom and the children. Visually and behavior wise. Normally smiling, Sade's eyes were vacant. We invited Mom to drop off Sade (and her little sister) for 1:1 respite care – special class time with a favorite staff and a break for mom – on site at Girls Inc. Mom was so anxious to not let her children out of her sight and did not have enough gas money to drop her off, go home and pick her up and return. She literally sat in her car in the parking lot pacing with her other kids and waited for Sade to come back out. Staff spoke with mom, connected her with personal resources, gas cards and groceries, and intentionally set up additional scheduled classes for Sade to give Mom continued breaks. No other service providers were providing child care or programming during this time. Everything stayed socially distanced but this mom and so many others like her needed breaks before she broke down herself or took it out on the kids. Overtime, Sade and all the family took part in all the Zoom classes that were available to them throughout the pandemic and invited others to join in too. Then when we implemented Learning Academy-onsite virtual school support (7:30-3:00 Monday –Friday) mom had grown to trust us and she was confident and secure that she could send her daughters to Girls Inc. for safe, quality, care. Overtime as we were allowed to add in the afterschool program and limited transportation home, Sade would request to stay and learn. Sade was given a chance to be a little girl again and participate in ongoing programming, included virtual talent shows and a drive up awards ceremony. Sade had become one of the most regular attenders of Girls Inc. program activities and was awarded Outstanding K-2 Grader for 2020. Mom smiles now. And so do we.