



Jody Bell of Greenwich

Teenage Entrepreneur Helping Immigrant Families

Two years ago, when Jody Bell was a sophomore at Greenwich High School, some close friends told her they were worried that their undocumented family members might be deported – and they didn't know what to do if that happened.

Indeed, according to the U.S. Census Bureau and other national organizations, about 4.1 million citizens under the age of 18 live with at least one undocumented parent.

"They didn't want to talk to their school counselors, for fear that their family members could wind up being outed," said Jody, now 17. "Their only option was to vent to peers like me."

Coincidentally, Jody had just started an after-school entrepreneurship program run by a group called "Girls with Impact." Described as a "mini-MBA" program, the 12-week course helps teenage girls create businesses, non-profits, or community service projects – thereby helping others while also nurturing their own confidence, sense of empowerment, and career readiness.

Guided by her mentors in this program, Jody conceived, designed, and launched a beautiful, easy-to-navigate website called "In Case of Deportation" (www.icodhelp.org), an educational resource for American-born children with parents or guardians at risk of deportation.

Written for kids ages 8-18, it explains what deportation is; how to talk to family members about it; provides links to government resources and other critical information; and offers a step-by-step Child Preparedness Plan.

Jody's website garnered international media attention when it was launched in July 2018, and her work has been praised by Sen. Richard Blumenthal, among many others. It is already being used by the Greenwich and New Rochelle, NY, school districts.

"This is an issue that affects my school, my area and my nation," Jody said. "Many children have nowhere to turn when that moment comes when someone knocks on your door and suddenly takes your parents away. There's a lot of information online, but it's so dense that it can be difficult to understand. I want to help kids figure out what they can do."