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Explorer and educator Liv Arnesen plans a 2012 expedition to Antarctica titled "The Access to Water Project." Above and below, Ms. Arnesen speaks Thursday at Girls Inc. about her experiences.

Polar explorer's lecture seeks to inspire local girls

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Polar adventurer Liv Arnesen spoke Thursday to dozens of young members of Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara about pursuing their dreams.

In 1994, at the age of 41, Ms. Arnesen became the first woman to ski unassisted to the South Pole. The trip took 50 days and she told her audience that she wasn't in contact with a single person for the duration of the trip.

Ms. Arnesen was introduced to the area after meeting Santa Barbara residents Bill and Sandi Nicholson on an expedition to Antarctica.

Mrs. Nicholson told the News-Press she was moved by Ms. Arnesen's desire to inspire young people to pursue their dreams and encouraged the explorer to speak to Girls Inc.

The organization encourages young girls to be "strong, smart, and bold," its website says.

"I'm excited to see how the girls are going to respond," said program director Melisa Gleason before Ms. Arnesen commenced.

"If you think my accent's a little strange, that's the Norwegian accent," Ms. Arnesen told the dozens of young girls sitting on the floor in front of her.

"The most important word in my lecture today is 'dreams,'" she said.

She talked of her dreams as a young girl in Norway and how she wanted to "create a fleet" and visit children all over the world. But then her family went on a high-seas vacation and she got seasick.

Her real dream, she said, was to ski to the South Pole. It was something she had wanted to do since she was 8½, she told the News-Press. "I really love skiing," she said.

"I think some of you have dreams," she said. "And it's very important to



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have patience."

She said she didn't realize her dream until later in life. "When I was 41, I was ready," said Ms. Arnesen of her solo ski to the South Pole.

"It's like skiing on frozen ocean—up and down, up and down," she said.

In 2001, Ms. Arnesen went on another frigid adventure — this time with fellow polar adventurer and Minnesota-native Ann Bancroft. The two of them sailed and skied across

Antarctica.

They had four objectives, Ms. Arnesen said.

The first was to be the first women to ski and sail across the massive piece of frozen land; the second was to make a successful educational program as they went; the third was to remain friends "on the other side," and the fourth was to have fun throughout the experience.

"You have to push yourself a little bit," she said.

One of their "scariest" days in Antarctica, said Ms. Arnesen, was the day there was no wind to billow their sails

and move them on their way. Instead, they had to pull their sleds.

But, "here is how the saddest day ended," said Ms. Arnesen. "I brought a mouth harp" and "we tried to have some fun."

"People thought it was impossible," she said when asked if anyone had ever discouraged her. Her home country of Norway didn't even sponsor her on her first trip, she said.

After her solo trip to the South Pole, she said she took a celebratory, 40-minute shower and later discovered that was a luxury for the few people at the station because, in order for

people to bathe, the snow has to be melted.

The lecture was one of a series meant to raise public support for Ms. Arnesen's next adventure — a 2012 expedition to the South Pole titled "The Access to Water Project."

Ms. Arnesen says she will be joined by a woman from every continent on a journey meant to educate people about one of Earth's fundamental resources: water.

"Our goal is to communicate with 50 million young people," she said.

Ms. Arnesen said there are few "visionary politicians" in the world and

hopes her efforts captivate her young audiences. "Hopefully, 25 percent of them get really engaged," she told the News-Press.

The mission of her outdoor adventures is to "create a movement of young people helping young people," she said.

"So, do you think Miss Arnesen is strong, smart and bold?" Monica Spear, executive director of Girls Inc. asked the girls after the lecture.

They responded with a resounding "Yes."

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