

ParentMap 2018 Superhero Kristin Ebeling: The Skateboarder

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PARENTING/MINDFULNESS

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A Q&A with the director of Skate Like a Girl Seattle

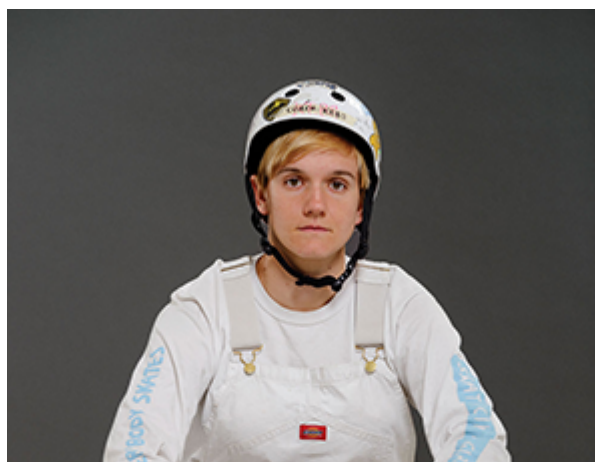
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At 16, Kristin Ebeling considered quitting.

She was a pretty good skateboarder — and more importantly, loved it — but was



disheartened by experience after experience of being judged for her looks rather than her skills. Then she went to an all-girl skateboarding contest sponsored by the Seattle-based organization



Kristin Ebeling. Photo credit: Will Austin

[Skate Like a Girl](#). “I was skeptical, but I showed up, and my jaw hit the floor,” she says. “I was hooked.”

In Skate Like a Girl’s community of female athletes, Ebeling found encouraging mentors. She also found a career path. In 2013, she began working full-time at Skate Like a Girl. In the five years since, she’s transformed the all-volunteer organization into a staffed nonprofit with a \$300,000 annual budget and branches in three cities (Seattle, Portland and San Francisco).

Among other programs — many of which are free — Skate Like a Girl runs the Youth Employment Skateboarding (YES) Program to train teens of all genders in first aid, skate instruction, financial literacy and inclusivity. The nonprofit also hosts skateboarding showcases, including the annual [Wheels of Fortune](#). Held in May, the Seattle competition features skateboarders of all levels, from little kids to professionals.

As part of its mission to create an inclusive community and empower young people, especially women, Skate Like a Girl also runs a series of summer camps. On the docket this summer for the first time: a camp specifically serving youth who identify as queer and/or transgender.

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...think having equal opportunities to try new things is a right," Ebeling says. And while she acknowledges that skateboarding may not be a need, just trying it matters.

"Whether or not someone sticks with skateboarding, they've done something new," she says. "I've seen the confidence that gives."

Q What's one small action our readers can take in their own lives to make positive change happen?

My favorite advice is "Seek to understand before being understood." This works. It helps you find common ground while the reverse sets you up for anger, bitterness and negativity.

Q Best advice for kids with big ambition?

Err on the side of saying yes. Obviously, you have to have safe boundaries, but don't be scared to say yes and just try something. It opens doors. Experimentation is when you make discoveries. I've been on reality TV and traveled the world because I was willing to just show up and try.

Q What's one takeaway you'd like families to understand about your line of work or area of expertise?

Skateboarding will be [an Olympic sport in 2020!](#) This is so cool because all Olympic sports are required to have men's and women's teams. This will create new opportunities for women at all levels of skateboarding, and it will help to mainstream and normalize the sport.

Also, that most people don't realize that [skateboarding is statistically safer than basketball and soccer.](#)

Q What's the most misunderstood part of your job?

A lot of people don't understand that running a nonprofit is my real job. People think I get a ton of time to skateboard.

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