

BY JANE CIABATTARI

Parade's Special  
**Intelligence  
Report**

**'What I Wish  
I'd Been Told as a Kid'**



The actress Marlo Thomas (c), whose 25-year-old creation still appeals to young folks like these

It has been 25 years since Marlo Thomas gathered a group in her living room and asked, "What do you wish you'd been told as a kid?" Their answers (that it's OK to cry, that girls don't always have to get married and boys don't always have to be strong, and that boys and girls can grow up to be equal partners) became *Free To Be... You and Me*, a book of stories and a record album. "I would have liked someone to have said these things to me," Thomas tells us. "Nobody has really solved these issues, and they don't seem to be writing about them in children's stories now."

The stories have influenced a generation of parents and still are used in schools in 30 states. "I listened to it when I was a kid, and now I listen with my kids," says Rosie O'Donnell. A 25th-anniversary edition, including the sequel *Free To Be... a Family*, is out this week from Running Press. "These stories tell kids that, no matter where you start in life, anything is possible," says Whoopi Goldberg, who contributed one story. Proceeds from the sales go to the Free To Be Foundation, which finances programs to enrich and protect kids.