

Mother's Awareness on School-age Kids Engages, Educates and Empowers

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Monday, 06 October 2014 14:43 - Last Updated Monday, 06 October 2014 14:56



MASK is a nonprofit that supports and encourages parents and families to engage and talk about the raw realities and temptations that kids face every day. The organization gives parents the tools they need to confidently empower and educate their children.

Mother's Awareness on School-age Kids (MASK) is a nonprofit organization founded by three stay-at-home moms in Phoenix. Kimberly Cabral was adamant about having open communication with her young children about the battles that kids face on a regular basis at school. She wanted to be able to talk comfortably with them about bullying, eating disorders, Internet safety, self-esteem and drugs and alcohol in hopes that they wouldn't feel judged or fear getting in trouble.

After gaining insight on what some of her children's friends were doing at such young ages, Cabral knew something needed to be done—so she teamed up with fellow moms, Pam Baumann and Michelle Cardini, to formulate a plan. They researched counselors, police departments and nonprofits to find a program that might benefit their families and schools and realized quickly that there were no programs designed for students as young as elementary-age and as old as college-age that addressed and educated kids on such topics.

In August 2007, they planned a MASK meeting. Fifty parents showed up for the first meeting, and the moms knew they were onto something. "You can educate the kids, but you have to educate the climate as well. And get the reinforcement educated," Cabral says. MASK soon became a 501c3, created a logo, and before they knew it, 250 people were attending their meetings.

MASK's mission is "to educate both parents and children about the issues facing our youth and to empower children to make safe, healthy choices." Cabral, Baumann and Cardini became educated in bullying, sex crimes, eating disorders and other troubling issues on the rise with young people and integrated them into age-appropriate groups. By speaking to kids in schools, holding private group meetings for parents and their children, and a variety of E3 programs and summer camps (Engage, Educate, Empower), MASK allows for a plethora of resources and opportunities for parents to learn to successfully communicate with and empower their children.

The organization created MASK The Magazine in 2011 and was awarded one of the top 15 hottest launches in New York that year. Between its magazine and its Web site, MASK now reaches more two million people. MASK holds two large events each year: Moms Making a Difference Unity Award Luncheon in the spring and a MASKer Aide Ball, coming up on Oct. 4. MASK has big plans for the future to bring its programs and magazine to a national level and to continue to create a gateway for open communication and education in our homes and our schools.

SAVE THE DATE:

The MASKer Aide Ball is a black tie and mask affair being held at Fairmont Scottsdale Princess on Saturday, Oct. 4 from 6 to 10:30 p.m. The event is in celebration of MASK's seventh year of continual success in educating and empowering families and improving the lives of children. This event will consist of live music, dancing, auctions and fine dining. Individual MASKer Aide Ball tickets are \$175; tables of 10 are \$1,750. To learn more, go to maskmatters.org.