



Education for Successful Parenting

POST EVENT PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Randi Rubenstein, Founder (949) 646-6016
Keri Gee Semmelman, Board Member/PR Volunteer (714) 724-2221

First-ever “The Dream of Family” Event in Orange County Attracts Hundreds

Teenagers and Young Adults Share their Dreams of their Future Families

(Orange County, CA – January 2011) More than 500 people of all ages attended a 3-1/2 hour lively event in the Macy’s Court of Westminster Mall on Saturday, January 15, as young adults age 13 to 22 creatively expressed their dream of family. Their expressions came in a variety of different artistic forms. Some delivered thought-provoking speeches or poems they had written, others sang original lyrics through tears and cheers about heartbreak and love based on their own childhood experiences. Instrumental pieces were equally compelling. A group of young men expressed their hopes through a well-choreographed dance, and some shared their dream through poignant paintings, drawings, sculptures, and other forms of art. A stanza in a song by Cathy Dang revealed the promises she is making to her future child: *“I swear not to have you until I’m ready, And I swear to provide you with everything I can, And I swear to be that person you believe in, And I swear to give you all the love you can breathe in.”*

Another youth, 18 year old Brenda Sandoval, dedicated her speech to her mom, describing her as the kind of parent she wishes every child could have someday. “This event allowed me to get up in front of my peers and express everything I was feeling without any embarrassment,” said Sandoval. “My hope is that instead of teens becoming an early parent and having all the responsibilities that go with it, they’ll first prepare for a career and live the kind of life they dream about.”

The festivities were all part of the inaugural “The Dream of Family” teen expression showcase at Westminster Mall. The event was innovated by Randi Rubenstein, founder and executive director of Education for Successful Parenting (ESP) – an Orange County, CA based nonprofit that dedicates itself to improving the wellbeing of children and families by educating teens about parenting responsibilities, providing them with a rationale for waiting until adulthood to become parents.

ESP’s Vice President of Development Ursula Luciani said, “For some teens, it was an opportunity for them to honor their parents and family. For those who did not come from healthy family environments, it gave them an opportunity to dream of what a healthy family would be like and to aspire to reach that dream. For ESP, it was a time to raise awareness of both the dream and the stepping-stones that can help them fulfill the dream of creating healthy families.”

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Health Instructor from Estancia High School, Michael Bargas, offered a testimonial about how he and his students have welcomed the important work and mission of the organization for the past five years. Several teenagers - including leaders of ESP's Generation Next teen group -- shared testimonials about the importance of making healthy, responsible choices before conceiving the next generation of children. Supervisor Janet Nguyen's office proclaimed January 15, 2011 as "Education for Successful Parenting Day" in Orange County. Given the theme, "The Dream of Family," Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez addressed the audience. She spoke about how the support and encouragement of her immigrant parents made it possible for her and her siblings to go to college and pursue their dreams. Trang Nguyen, Brandon Ngo, and Vivian Thai of the Bolsa Grande Key Club listened intently to her speech. "I learned from her that parents are the most influential people in their children's lives and that once we become parents it will be important for us to find ways to help our children follow their dreams," said Nguyen. Westminster Mayor Margie Rice – who is a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother - spoke of our community responsibility to protect vulnerable children and commended ESP's work to create safer home environments. Assembly and Senate offices also presented certificates to participating youth.

Three special awards were presented to the artists who best expressed "The Dream of Family" theme. Receiving the InfoMedics Award for her entry was Amber Ellis, age 16, from the Harbor Learning Center whose spoken word piece was titled "Blasphemy." Anthony "Yin" Huynh, age 19, and his Ohana dance group from Orange Coast College earned the ESP Board of Directors' Award for their hip-hop performance. The ESP Founder's Award was presented to Cassandra Gonzalez, age 17, from the Westminster Mall Community Day School for a mixed media entry consisting of two drawings, "Behind Closed Doors," "Happy Loving Family," and the poem "If Teddy Bears Could Talk." Cathy Dang, 22, was recognized for writing and performing a theme song for the event called "Love You Can Breathe In." Dang's lyrics captured the essence of the non-profit's message so well, she was invited to perform her song at both the opening and closing of the event.

All in attendance, ranging from families of all ages, community leaders, educators and student groups, and those who came upon the event while shopping in the mall, were encouraged to describe their own dream of family on display boards, as well as post messages between teens and parents. Amid the festivities were face painting, an opportunity drawing, music from CD Players Entertainment, and recognizing inaugural event sponsors: Palo Capital; West Coast Artwear; InfoMedics, Inc.; Carlton Hair; Pridea; Infinity Printing; and Lucky Take. Westminster Mall/Simon Mall's generous allocation of Macy's Court for the setting was instrumental in making the event a reality. More than 200 teens volunteered at the event.

Education for Successful Parenting (ESP), which was founded in 2005, has already reached more than two thousand students by offering inspiring educational onsite classes. ESP also has workshops for parents of today's teens. The 501(c)3 non-profit, based in Tustin, CA, has translated health information about children's needs into teen-friendly language. The program envisions a world in which all parents are prepared, knowledgeable, competent and confident in handling their responsibilities and where all children are safe and loved. ESP is supported through private donations and grants to provide classes at no-cost for at-risk youth.

Westminster Mall is owned and managed by Simon Property Group, Inc., headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Westminster Mall is a two level enclosed super regional shopping center featuring JCPenney, Macy's, Sears and Target and over 170 specialty stores. Additional Simon Property Group and Westminster Mall information is available at www.simon.com.

For additional information about ESP, go to www.eduparents.org or contact Education for Successful Parenting at (949) 646-6016.

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