

RANCH & COAST

SAN DIEGO'S ULTIMATE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2012

New Year, New You

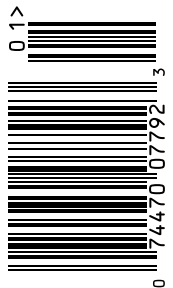
Innovative Home
Renewal Tips

At Home With
Susan Taylor

Enrichment
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Keeping Kids On A Positive Path

Kids who grow into stable, successful adults usually find a lot of help along the way. Instead of falling in with the wrong crowd — a risk for any child, no matter what their circumstances — they learn from strong role models who steer them clear of trouble and show them how to seize life's opportunities. Parents play the leading role, of course, but there's plenty of room for outside support too.

Honorable Qualities

This year, Girl Scouts of the USA celebrates its 100th anniversary, and though the day-to-day activities have changed over the past century, the core mission of scouting has remained the same: To teach girls to

become leaders with courage, confidence, and character.

"These are qualities that have been back-burnered," explains Carol LeBeau, the former 10News anchor who is serving as San Diego chair and Promise Leader for the centennial celebration. "In the last ten years, I've seen culture pulling girls backward, as they attempt to get noticed through uber-sexualization, celebrity worship, or by trying to make a viral video."

The service-oriented Girl Scouts San Diego, which counts 43,000 girl and adult members among its ranks, introduces girls to new skills, says LeBeau, who overcame painful shyness while earning a speechmaking badge for her sash

when she was a young scout.

"You don't know if you're talented at music if you never pick up an instrument," she points out. "We're not just



Little Brother Isaiah ice skating with his Big Brother Adolfo

teaching kids arts and crafts. We're teaching them how to be NASA engineers and CEOs of major corporations — leaders in every field."

They're All Just Kids

Also celebrating a major anniversary this year is the San Diego Center for Children, assisting troubled local youth for 125 years. Though the nonprofit — which has five campuses throughout the county and includes a residential facility and a school — is referral-based and targeted at underserved communities, parents can glean valuable tips from the center's programs.

"A lot of our kids have emotional disturbances as their primary disability," says school principal Nancy Macnamara. "Special Education doesn't mean you're not as smart as the



Girl Scouts S.D. board chair Katie Sullivan (seated at left) and Carol LeBeau (right) with Girl Scouts modeling vintage uniforms

other kids. It can mean you've missed a developmental stage in learning how to use appropriate social skills."

Parents who are dealing with emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders know the importance of imparting coping abilities. But every parent can teach empathy, which serves as an antidote to bullying, a severe problem in schools today. If your young ones have never been exposed to autism, for example, consider bringing them for a visit to the Center for Children.

"They'll find out that kids are kids," says Macnamara. "Sometimes they don't behave properly, but they still must be acknowledged and respected."

Don't Tell Me, Show Me

The Big Brothers Big Sisters organization has been pairing "Bigs" and "Littles" for more than a century nationally. "With a role model, kids are less likely to drop out of school, and less likely to get involved with drugs or gang activity," says Paul Palmer, CEO of the San Diego chapter, which has been around for 50 years.

The premise is simple. BBBS' children come from primarily single-parent households — maybe a father is overseas with the military, a mother works two jobs, or a parent is incarcerated. These kids are then paired with a carefully vetted mentor in one-to-one relationships. The Bigs and Littles hang out, from shooting hoops together to touring college campuses, and, with any luck, forge a deep, lasting friendship.



San Diego Center For Children Academy staff in their Olweus Anti-Bullying shirts

"The relationship is not meant to be a replacement for a parent, but rather an additional friend and role model to the child," says Palmer. "The trust is remarkable. They're really open to talking to their Bigs."

BBBS currently has a waiting list of over 800 children, primarily boys. January is National Mentoring Month — consider sponsoring a child (\$1,200 covers a child for an entire year).

Get High On Life

"Philosophically, our organization believes that before you can tell kids to say no to something, you really have to give them something to say yes to," says Michelle Ahearne, executive director of Natural High by the Sundt Memorial Foundation.

The organization, founded 17 years ago by Jon Sundt — who lost both his brothers to drug use — dispels the myth that all the cool kids are using, and has counted everyone from Tony Hawk to Lauren Conrad among its spokespersons.



Megan Hastings, founder of the Natural High Pledge Campaign, and Allura Garis, youth engagement coordinator

"Everybody has a natural high, whether it's a sport or some other activity," says Ahearne. "Kids should be able to talk to their parents about what that is."

Natural High distributes its DVD series to thousands of schools across the country, and a recent pledge drive started by Bishop's high school student Megan Hastings quickly grew to include 23,000 signatures. Kids are clearly listening.

If you need help asking your kids about their natural high, the organization offers materials to make "the talk" a lot easier.

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