

# STAND UP! PREVENT BULLYING NOW! SPEAK UP!

*Speaking out against bullying is easier said than done.*

Monica Harmon, President of Speak Out Against Bullying Inc., has made it her mission to educate students and parents about the dangers of bullying and cyber bullying. Last October Harmon was honored by Los Angeles City Council for her work. Quinceanera Magazine is especially thankful to Monica Harmon for her work with our very own Cover Girls and Q-Teen Girls. Our Cover Girls and Q-teen Members have had the honor of volunteering with Monica Harmon at many local community events. This past December our fabulous girls dedicated their time to assisting at the Annual Holiday Toy Drives hosted by the Los Angeles Police Department, for youth all over the city of Los Angeles.

**M**onica Harmon is a proud Mexican American woman who has dedicated her life to serving the community. In 2011, Harmon began her campaign against bullying because she saw the need in schools across the City to do so. Harmon makes presentations to thousands of students, educators, parents and the community at large all over Los Angeles County about the effects of bullying and the unfortunate growing trend of cyber bullying. Since she began, thousands have heard her speak out against bullying.

Erica Hilliard, Miss Cover Girl January 2011, had the chance to sit one on one with Ms. Monica Harmon to find out more about this inspiring campaign against bullying.

**Erica:** Hello Ms. Harmon. I know that you have worked in the community for many years. Can you tell us what inspired you to step up and take a stand against bullying?

**Monica:** While I was in high school I became an LAPD Cadet and I worked a lot in the community with kids and I really felt the gratification of doing that, and continued to do so my whole life. [A few years ago] Students and parents started talking to me about bullying in schools in Los Angeles. After researching I realized a lot needed to be done to help with the issue at schools. I wanted students to understand that bullying was harmful and how they could be motivated to make a difference at their schools.

**E:** What is the first step that someone would need to take to have Speak Out Against Bullying come and speak to them?

**M:** I receive a lot of calls from different schools, parent organizations, and community organizations who would like a presentation. The presentation covers bullying, cyber bullying, text bullying, and use of social media responsibly, respect and inclusion. For teenagers, Instagram, Snapchat, and all these social media applications are very popular right now. However, students need to learn to use them in a responsible manner not to harm another student. My presentation inspires students to take action and to help bring down the bullying climate in their school to provide a safer environment.

**E:** What is the age group you feel is most impacted by your presentation?

**M:** It's important to reach the younger kids first, because that is where it starts. I visit kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. After my presentation students want to be part of the solution and form leadership groups or safety committee groups. I provide Youth Leadership Toolkits for both students and administrators. I work in partnership with LAPD because they have great youth programs. We want to help the victims but we also help kids who bully. I like to get kids involved in positive activities such as a youth or sports program or a hobby which can boost confidence.

**E:** Wow this sounds like a really great program. Can you tell us a little about what parents can do to help a child who is going through bullying or if they notice that their child is a bully?

**M:** I think the main point that parents need to do is talk to their children. A lot of the victims of bullying will not talk to their parents or report the issue. They are afraid parents won't believe or support them and also fear of retaliation from the student who is bullying. It's important for parents to look for the signs of bullying such as loss of appetite, depression, stomach aches and much more. Also monitor your child's computer. Find out first, if their child is a victim or the child who bullies. Once they find out they should seek out resources such as school counselors as well as my program. Let us help you help your children.

**E:** Thank you so much for your information. Can you give a way of contacting you?

**M:** You can visit my website <http://www.speakoutagainstbullying.org/> and go to the about page. It has a phone number and an email where you can reach us.

If bullying is a problem at your school, Speak Out! It only takes one person to make a change. Are you ready to Speak Out Against Bullying? ■



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