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Miramonte Graduate Discusses Ways to Keep Teens Safe

Sister-to-Sister summit helps middle school girls build sense of self

Submitted by Jen Vaccaro



Middle school participants and high school facilitators at last year's Sister-to-Sister summit. Photo provided

explained Leonard, noting that these skills have taken on a new degree of relevance as adolescents navigate through internet and social media sites.

"My plan is for all participants to feel the greatest possible sense of confidence, that they have the power to make conscious choices to deal with potentially difficult situations with skill, strength, competence and grace," she said.

Sister-to-Sister, a nonprofit and Lamorinda-based group, selected Leonard to participate at its summit because her goals closely align with the Sister-to-Sister mission. Sister-to-Sister actively supports giving young women the tools to succeed in relationships and to build a strong sense of self. Professional women from the Lamorinda community train local high school girls to lead the summit day. The summit is held for middle school girls who come from all over the Bay Area. In addition to Leonard's presentation, the summit day includes a dynamic mix of interactive games and opportunities to form close connections with the other middle and high school participants.

To register for the March 16 Sister-to-Sister summit and to participate in Leonard's workshop, or to get more information, visit www.sister2sister.info.

In 1984, during Erika Leonard's sophomore year at Miramonte High School, one of her classmates was murdered by a fellow Miramonte student - a shocking aberration in the safe and quiet community of Orinda. When Leonard graduated from Miramonte two years later, she became determined to help make life better for teens.

For the past 18 years, Leonard has taught personal safety techniques to adolescents and people of all ages and backgrounds, and is returning to Lamorinda March 16 to give a Kidpower workshop at the annual Sister-to-Sister summit at Bentley High School. Leonard, who now serves as program manager for Kidpower - an organization that teaches safety techniques - understands that anyone from any community can benefit from learning safety strategies.

Leonard's workshop will help students project awareness; learn how to notice the signs of possible problems before they grow; how to create physical and emotional distance to be safe; set boundaries; use their voices and words in ways that can help move problems towards safety and resolution rather than escalation; and learn how to get help persistently and effectively.

Advocating for oneself in a strong and appropriate way is crucial for academic, social and professional success,

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[back](#)

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