

DOCUMENTARY GOES AFTER GIRL BULLYING

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Is the "girl world" a place where young girls and developing young ladies want to be?

According to Pepperdine University graduates Lauren Parsekian and Molly Stroud, founders of the nonprofit Kind Campaign, every girl goes through or takes part in some type of girl-against-girl bullying, including physical fighting, name-calling, threats, power struggles, competition, manipulation, secrets, rumors and ostracizing others.

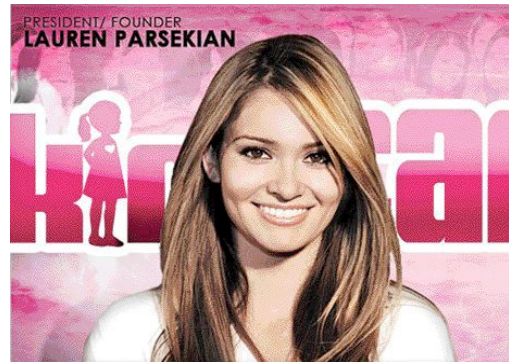
Although girls are no strangers to such activity, Miss Parsekian and Miss Stroud say it's not a well-known or recognized issue in society. In hopes of changing that, the pair have hit the road with their college degrees, cameras and passion to make a documentary about the subject.

The goal of the project is to encourage girls to stop the competition, stop the cattiness, stop the hate and to be kind.

Their journey began Sept. 1 in Malibu and will take them to 60 cities by year end. Miss Parsekian was in Santa Barbara last week.

"The adventure started at the Mountain Documentary Film Festival in Telluride two years ago, but the issue has been with me since I was a little girl," she told the News-Press. Miss Parsekian said she entered middle school as one of the "popular girls" until her so-called friends ostracized her, resulting in female wrath the remainder of her middle school years.

"I was tortured. I became scared to go to school, for the fear of what new tortuous experience they would put me through," she said. "My grades started to drop, I was scared to answer the phone, and finding places to hide on campus became a daily routine. Through this time I battled depression and thought about suicide frequently. I remember feeling worthless, ugly, stupid, and more than anything else, I felt like my world was over."



Knowing she wanted to help girls with these issues, but having no idea about how to address them, she realized during the film festival in Telluride that a documentary was a realistic way to go. She pitched the idea to producer Tom Shadyac ("Bruce Almighty," "Patch Adams") for whom she served an internship. Mr. Shadyac fully supported the idea and supplied her with cameras and is sponsoring the Kind Campaign trip.

The tour around the U.S. was also made possible by the support and company of the women's mothers; Crown Toyota, which donated a 2009 Sienna; Chris Harrison, host of ABC's "The Bachelor," who provided the funds for gas; and Susan Salas, their production professor and mentor.

"After I had my idea set up, I thought about someone I wanted to do this project with. Molly and I met up and I told her about the documentary and she was immediately on board," Miss Parsekian said. "We started brainstorming and started interviewing girls and we realized that people were wanting to speak out."

The issue, they decided, was bigger than just a documentary, so they launched their nonprofit organization about a year ago.

"And about six months ago, we launched our interactive Web site (www.kindcampaign.com) where girls can go and share their stories and know they aren't alone," Miss Parsekian added.

With the documentary and nonprofit organization, Miss Parsekian and Miss Stroud hope to create a program where they screen the movie in schools, have a dialogue about the issue and provide some sort of resource materials for the schools to use.

Their overall mission is creating a movement "based upon the powerful belief in kindness, that seeks to bring awareness and healing to the negative and lasting effects of abuse within the 'Girl World.' "

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