



**LifeSmarts**  
*Learn it. Live it.*

## Faces of LifeSmarts | Anna Araujo

Boys & Girls Club of East LA CPO, LifeSmarts ally



## Collaborations boosting LifeSmarts impact

Local partnership empowering East LA teens and their families

Anna Araujo faces a lot of challenges as the Chief Professional Officer of the Boys & Girls Club of East LA. Working in a traditionally underserved community, the Club strives to make the biggest positive impact with its limited time and resources while serving more than 800 families. LifeSmarts, a teen consumer education program hosted by the National Consumers League, is one of the latest tools Anna is using to empower her young members.

“I saw the LifeSmarts program as a very natural fit with the Club’s mission of enabling and inspiring youth,” says Anna. “Our Club focuses on bringing in opportunities and removing obstacles to success.” Anna believes in the LifeSmarts program’s ability to “drastically change kids’ lives by teaching them

how to use our financial system, how to defend their rights and, most importantly, how to advocate for themselves.”

LifeSmarts focuses on five key areas of consumer knowledge: personal finance, consumer rights and responsibilities, health and safety, technology and the environment. Within a single program year, teen participants learn about everything from home mortgages to online safety and fraud using content that is developed and updated using the latest theories in education.

“For me, LifeSmarts will allow my kids to have success in life; it will teach them how to save

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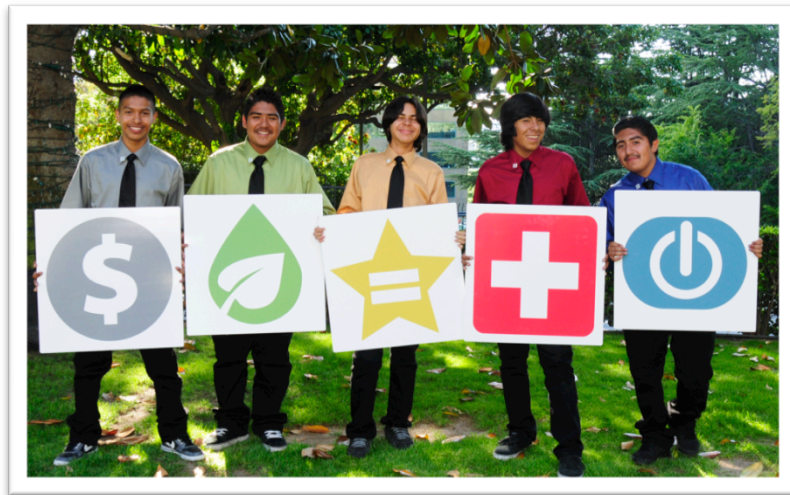


money, how to invest, and how to use credit,” says Anna excitedly. “If they have access to that kind of knowledge, our kids can make intelligent decisions instead of feeling like they have no control and these are exactly the types of skills we want to develop as early as possible.”

Preparing her kids for success after high school is one of Anna’s most important goals. She sees financial savvy as critically important since East LA was heavily affected by the recent economic downturn and foreclosure crisis. Anna sees the LifeSmarts program as a great way to teach participants “what to look out for and how to read the fine print.” She also believes that the skills her kids develop benefit not only participants themselves, but their families as well.

“The kids have realized that a lot of what they are learning is knowledge they can share with their families, who may not have gotten a lot of these skills themselves in a community as diverse as ours with families coming from a variety of backgrounds,” explains Anna.

After learning about LifeSmarts and familiarizing herself with the fast-paced format, Anna was convinced that she had to start the first ever Boys & Girls Club



*LifeSmarts students from the Boys & Girls Club of East LA representing California at their first national competition in 2011 in Hollywood.*

LifeSmarts team, a team that had an exciting and successful first year, qualifying and traveling to the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual LifeSmarts National Championship in Hollywood. Anna’s team was a mix of students from different high school and middle schools throughout East LA who saw LifeSmarts and its live competition format as a fun, active way to develop the skills necessary to navigate today’s complex economic landscape.

With Anna’s enthusiasm and encouragement, her team of young members took to the LifeSmarts curriculum immediately; the Boys & Girls Club and had only been with the program for two months before qualifying for Nationals!

Anna describes the flurry of preparation and activity following the qualifying announcement: “We just couldn’t believe it!” she exclaims. “There was definitely a sense of ‘be careful what you

wish for’ but the kids quickly buckled down, started doing online searches, buying *Consumer Reports* magazine, asking older Club members questions, and getting really comfortable with the live competition format.”

The Club team advanced through several rounds at the 2011 National Championship and came “this close” to making it to Philadelphia in 2012, placing second at state. They are already looking forward to 2013.

Anna has already been able to see the early results of exposure to the program. “LifeSmarts gives kids the information that, if something doesn’t go right, they can react to it in a intelligent way where the result will be positive instead of negative,” she says. “The power of LifeSmarts is that it gives students real skills that translate into real life!”