

## EDUCATION

# Pick the best school for your child

It is that time of year again, the time to reassess our children's school system and determine if it meets our expectations. In early May and throughout the summer schools reevaluate their budgets, curriculums, and staffing, so why don't we (the customer) do the same.

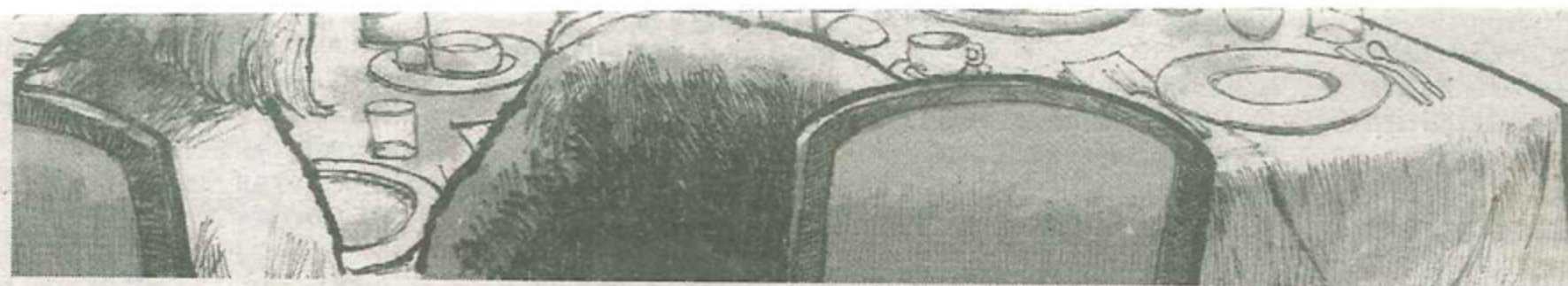
With the ever going number of public, private, parochial, and public-charter school options surrounding our neighborhoods it is our parenting right to find the best school for our children. However, we are often content with the school down the street and, in most cases, I find parents are not even aware of how the school their children attend academically ranks statewide. As parents we surf the Internet looking for the best job, the best Christmas presents for our kids, even the best café to eat at, but seldom do I run across parents who have researched the best school for their children.

In this day and age we always want the best, the fastest, the latest, so I thought I would help the parents of today under-

2. Do you know the three most important academic questions to ask your school, your child's teacher, and yourself? The first question is: "What should my child know each year according to the Department of Education?" The second question is: "Where is my child academically according to the State Standards?" The third and final question is "How are we going to get my child to the level he/she needs to be at?" As parents if we learn the right questions to ask and expect our educators to know the answers to these questions we will begin forging the correct educational path; a path towards accountability for our educators and for all parents.

From one parent to the mass of parents it is time we rise up and realize that we are our children's first teachers, let's get out there and hold ourselves and our schools accountable for our children's education. Research the schools in your area and remember Arizona has an open enrollment school system, if you are not pleased with your child's school because they don't live up to your expectations academically choose a school that can provide the best well-rounded education for your child.

**Adam Sharp**



# Mothers are the backbone of our society, we need to take care of them

**M**other's Day is an important time of year at Fresh Start Women's Foundation. We value moms in the highest regard and know they need to be taken care of. We believe that if you support a mother — with counseling, career services, legal assistance, higher education — you support not only that woman, but her family as well. If we can keep our moms confident, positive, and moving forward in their lives, their entire family will be impacted in a positive way.

The women we see come through the doors at the Jewell McFarland Lewis Women's Resource are from all walks of life. But they all have a common goal — to better their lives and the lives of their families.

There are sad stories, like Nancy who fled Nevada to come to Arizona with \$50 and a bus ticket out of state. She had a gun held to her head when she was six months pregnant and knew she had to get out for her safety and the safety of her child. She found placement at a local shelter and began coming to Fresh Start for career services. Four years later she now has a steady job and is entered into Fresh Start's mentoring program.

There are the women like Denai, so strong and brave. She leaves her job

at McDonald's everyday to pick up her 3-year-old from school. They take the bus to Fresh Start and she is happy knowing she can leave her son at Fresh Start's Child Watch while she sees her counselor. Denai is now taking classes at night so she can start the path to a new career, something meaningful to her that will help her family.

There is Carolina, who came to Fresh Start and was so moved by what she was learning, that she would document everything so that she could go

home and share the information with her husband and family. She and her family are doing great and just opened their own business.

And then there are the women you wouldn't expect, like Coleen. She had a home in Arcadia and the life of her

dreams, but it all shattered around her when she went through a bitter divorce. She came to Fresh Start three days a week and took everything from finance classes to self-confidence seminars. Coleen now has her own business and employs sales representatives across the country.

These women make me so proud. They needed assistance in their life and they came for help. So many times women feel that they need to do it on their own and they live a life of depression and fear. Think of how that affects their family, and the community surrounding them.

Mothers are the backbone of our society and we need to take care of them. Fresh Start is here for any woman, regardless of economic background, whatever their need. If we can improve the lives of the moms who care for so many around them, we will be making great strides in bettering our community.

To learn more about Fresh Start, visit [phoenix.wehelpwomen.com](http://phoenix.wehelpwomen.com). Fresh Start is currently in the middle of a two-month matching campaign where donations are matched dollar-for-dollar.

**Susan Berman is president and chief executive officer of Fresh Start Women's Foundation in Phoenix.**



**Susan Berman**

**Letters to the editor:** Please be brief (no more than 200 words) and include name, address, city and phone number for verification. Comments may be edited for clarity and length.

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