

The Very Private Side Of Private Elementary Schools

Description

During our April 19 panel discussion at the Beverly Hills Country Club, panelist and private school expert, Kim Hamer* told the audience she lost her husband a year ago to cancer. Parents who heard her speak were moved by her composure in the face of such a staggering loss. Several of them were in tears. Kim went on to say that her children's schools (PS#1 and Windward) have been incredibly supportive and continue to provide support to her and her three children. She mentioned that a mom who she doesn't know called her recently to ask if Kim needed something from Target. When Kim hesitated, the mom pressed her saying, "Kim I know there's something you must need."

I realized that Kim's willingness to share her story illustrated a side of private schools many people don't really know about. The supportive community found at many private schools (and probably public schools too) was new to me when my kids began school at The Willows. When my daughter was in kindergarten, a Willows mom who had breast cancer and underwent a double mastectomy was offered help to deal with the crisis facing her family. Willows families drove her kids to school and back. Many of us dropped off healthy meals for her family. We grocery shopped for her, using a list she provided. When she felt well enough for us to stop, we did. Then, when she needed more help, we picked up where we left off. I'm sure the school did much more than I even know. I'm thrilled to say that she is now healthy and gorgeous, taking care of her two kids.

The school also rallied around an amazing Willows mom who cared for her husband during his long battle with non-smokers lung cancer. The school helped take care of her family's needs both during his illness and after his death. Recently, she entered a Facebook contest on Ciao Bambino to win a free trip to Italy to honor her late husband's work there. Willows families used Facebook to help her win the trip. She's so excited that together with her two children, she'll get the chance to visit the places in Italy she and her late husband shared together.

I can honestly say that this is a side of private schools I didn't know existed. I lost my mom to breast cancer when I was 19 so I think I'm especially sensitive to the needs of families who are facing illness and death. I've been so amazed at the outpouring of support for families who are dealing with tragedy at our school. There may be many things that come to mind when you think of private schools in LA. But, taking care of their own during difficult times probably isn't something most people think much about. The schools don't talk about it. They just help to take care of the family in need. That's the way it should be.

Kim Hamer is a mom at Windward and PS#1 and a former educational consultant.

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1. Beyond The Brochure

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1. private school community

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