



Mayor Jay Tibshraony with the ICAN kids

Big DREAMS

making a difference

By Megan Gajeski | Submitted photos

It's been a busy year for ICAN of Arizona. Turning twenty-five, celebrating with their yearly gala and an upcoming community breakfast are just a few things they have to be proud of.

The Valley's leader in after-school programs provides free, comprehensive services to more than two hundred and fifty at risk youth and their families on a daily basis.

ICAN is not just a place to keep kids busy after the bell rings. They work on a deeper level with youth on skills needed to be responsible and productive members of society. The nationally accredited program focuses on four main areas: Youth Development, Healthy Lifestyles, Job Skills, and Education.

Many kids living in the areas served by ICAN live in extreme poverty. Drugs and alcohol are prevalent in the communities, and often times joining a gang or dropping out of school are more appealing than studies. ICAN's mission is to intervene and help build healthy lives and futures for these youth and their families.

Providing a healthy meal, free transportation from school, art and computer classes, and substance abuse prevention are several things the staff at ICAN focuses on each day. "Including the families



ICAN's dreamBIG gala raises critical dollars to continue and expand programs

of our kids is key," says Shelby Pederson, CEO of ICAN. "Kids are more likely to continue coming if their family is involved."

ICAN is a community supported organization. Grants and donations keep ICAN free for all participants. Events such as the "dreamBIG" gala give ICAN the chance to educate the public about their services, as well as raise awareness and funds for their great programs. Dream big is what the youth at ICAN do every day. Their signature gala was held on December 4th at the Sheraton Wild Horse in Chandler. Along with entertainment, dinner, and cocktails, famous magician Murray Sawchuck mesmerized guests with his illusions.

Shelby Pederson's goal is to continue educating the community on the importance of programs like ICAN. She realizes that every community in Arizona and beyond has the need and would like to see more places like ICAN.

If you would like to learn more about the work Shelby and her staff do with the kids, you can attend the "Building Bright Futures" breakfast on Tuesday, February 28th at 7:30 a.m. at 650 E. Morelos Street in Chandler. Breakfast is free, so come see what great things are being done at ICAN. For more information contact Courtney Taylor at 480-874-7575.



If you would like more information on ICAN, visit www.icanaz.com or call 480-821-4207.