

BY CINDY CANTRELL | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

# Getting teens out of their comfort zone

By **Cindy Cantrell** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 22, 2016

When Brookline resident Marie Schwartz's two sons were teenagers, she wanted to provide them with the same experiential learning opportunities that she enjoyed while growing up in France. After discovering that most summer program resources were geared toward younger children, the former marketing professional compiled her exhaustive research of teen enrichment opportunities into printed guides that were distributed through area schools.



JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

**Marie Schwartz started TeenLife Media.**

Constant requests for updated and expanded versions led her in 2007 to found TeenLife Media, which features publications for students and their parents and an online search engine of more than 13,000 summer programs, volunteer opportunities, gap-year experiences, independent advisers, high schools, colleges, and college admission resources.

**Q. Why is experiential learning important?**

A. Research shows that today's students are not emotionally prepared for college and life in general. They spend too much time in front of screens and aren't developing the skills that employers want. The point is getting kids out of their comfort zone when they're teenagers, so it's not such a shock later on. The upside is they can find something they had never thought about, and the experience could change their life.

**Q. What is your business model?**

A. We're known in the top 15 major metropolitan areas, but we have listings in all 50 states. We're paid to promote certain programs more than others, but all our listings are free and the search function covers everything. Our goal is to give visitors whatever type of relevant content they're looking for.

**Q. What can participants expect from the upcoming virtual fair?**

A. We held community service fairs for teens for six years, and they were mob scenes. Now students can hear from 12 presenters with different perspectives on preparing for college and interact in real time with more than 30 exhibitors through live chats and videos — all free and from the comfort of their home.

**Q. What is your ultimate vision for the company?**

A. I want TeenLife to be a household name and a brand that people trust. We're raising money to accelerate our growth and offer additional services, like courses, tailored advice, test prep, and internship placement. The goal is to inspire purpose and passion in teens and help them be successful in whatever they choose to do.

*The TeenLife LIVE Virtual Fair will take place on Sunday, Jan. 31, noon-6 p.m. The event is free, but advance registration is required at [teenlife.com](http://teenlife.com).*

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