

Beauty and brains

She'll be the big sister, friend and mentor every young girl needs with a course that's designed to develop beautiful minds, as **Sue Short** reports

SHE'S beautiful – no ... gorgeous – both inside and out and has an incredible driving passion to assist young women to walk the minefield of life with complete confidence armed with the skills they will need to make the right choices to create a life for themselves filled with happiness and success.

Sounds like a big ask, doesn't it? But make-up artist and grooming expert Marina Passalaris doesn't flinch. In fact, she is so passionate about what she is doing that she has even bigger plans for the future.

So that young Coast women won't end up in dead-end jobs, abusive relationships, feel less than others, have poor body image and lack self confidence – to name but a few of her goals – Marina has devised a 10-day course.

It will run over 10 weeks and will teach young women all the skills they need to go out and get what they want and, more importantly, what they deserve.

"I feel that if I had learned these skills at school or at the ages they are at now it would have been a smoother journey for me."

Marina has called the course Beautiful Minds, and that's exactly what she is aiming to create with the help of five professionals including one of Queensland's top photographers Greg Gardner; professional MC and TV presenter and compere Ara Phillips; senior personal trainer Adam Budd; life coach and counsellor Dea Theo; and top hair stylist Bernie Craven from Em La Gem Hair.

An experienced makeup artist and teacher of grooming and deportment in modelling agencies for more than 10 years, Marina is quick to point out this course is not just another modelling course.

"It is a journey of self-discovery," Marina said. "The aim of Beautiful Minds is to make young minds as beautiful on the inside as they are on the outside."

The course will cover public speaking, poise and posture, body language, makeup artistry, positive self promotion, dress sense, drug and alcohol abuse counselling, nutrition, exercise, how to express your emotions, hair care and styling and the art of social etiquette.

"Working in the modelling and entertainment industry I have always struggled against the idea of trying to instil confidence in young minds in a model agency environment. I believe that it doesn't work 100% as these girls are learning in an environment that's main focus is on appearance, weight and height," Marina said.

"Girls often get pushed into signing up as a



Marina Passalaris and a team of experts including photographer Greg Gardner and Bernie Craven (next page) look forward to helping young women make the best of their lives through the Beautiful Minds course.

PHOTO: GREG GARDNER PHOTOGRAPHY

model after the course and when no work arrives, as they may not be suited to the industry, their confidence goes back to what it was when they first started the course. It's not an environment that nurtures them enough."

Marina took the basic principles of what she taught in modelling and grooming courses and added a more holistic approach that included life skills, which also looked at other areas of a young girl's life including emotional and mental issues.

"It's a mixture of counselling, looking after yourself and confidence; aspects that are taught in modelling agencies as well as bringing in life skills," Marina said.

"Basically, if I can have a positive impact on moulding young minds I believe it will help to develop strong, confident individuals and that will have a ripple effect on Aussie society," she said.

"I am 30 now and I feel that if I had learned these skills at school or at the ages they are at now it would have been a smoother journey for me."

Not that Marina had a particularly rough

journey in her youth, but she admits to the usual pitfalls such as bad relationship choices, times when she lacked confidence and self image issues.

"I feel that if I had had those skills instilled in me at an early age it would have been a lot easier," Marina said. "There are many challenges for girls today; they don't have enough confidence in themselves due to the media and lack of good self image, which is so important."

Healthy relationships with men are also a big issue for young women today as well as drug abuse.

"We will teach them what to accept and what they deserve out of life. A lot of people don't learn to want the best for themselves and to aspire for the best for themselves in life," Marina said. "There is also a huge drug issue with our youth – they don't get enough education about it."

Marina hails from South Africa, where she studied performing arts and worked in the modelling and entertainment industry from the age of 17.