



Centerstone Releases New Comic Book For Students About LGBTQ+ Identity

May 6 2022 9:00 AM

SPARK



UNMASKED

NASHVILLE — Centerstone, a national leader in behavioral health and addiction services, announces the release of its seventh topical comic book. Spark Unmasked addresses matters of identity among LGBTQ+ youth and is available now to read for free at centerstone.org/comics.

Centerstone Comics are part of the organization's Prevention Services that educate and empower youth to make positive decisions when faced with common real-life issues. In an approachable way, each new story explores a complex topic with help from superhero Spark (actually a teenager named Amber Hernandez). The series has also tackled bullying, depression and suicide, online safety, sexting, drugs, and underage drinking.

Spark Unmasked introduces Aspen, a student whose pronouns are they/them. Having trouble fitting in at school, Aspen is befriended by Amber (Spark) who helps them connect with a school teacher, Ms. Aliada.

"I've worked with many LGBTQ+ youth on campus and with several outreach programs," says Aliada. "I want you to feel safe and heard, but I do know there is more to it than just getting an ally to listen."

Aspen gains confidence learning about organizations that will connect them to various supports and social opportunities.

"I've heard of GLAAD but not GLSEN," says Aspen. "It says they want students to have the right to a safe, supportive and LGBTQ-inclusive K-12 education. I like that."

To develop Spark Unmasked, Centerstone partnered with writer Allison Chaney Whitmore in Los Angeles as well as pencil and ink artist Carola Borelli, colorist Agnese Pozza, and letterer Roberto Megna, all based in Italy. Centerstone's Pride+ employee resource group was also consulted on the project.

"We're excited to bring Spark Unmasked and important conversations within the LGBTQ+ community to a larger audience," said Amanda McGeshick, Centerstone program manager. "Our organization encounters a lot of young people whose mental health suffers due to stigma and discrimination in this space. We hope this new resource will be helpful to students, families, and community leaders everywhere."

The release of Spark Unmasked coincides with national Free Comic Book Day on May 7. In addition to centerstonecomics.org, comic fans can find Spark Unmasked via [Tapas](#) and [Webtoon](#). Physical copies will also be distributed in June at the Upper Cumberland Pride and Nashville Pride festivals in Tennessee.

About Centerstone

[Centerstone](#) is a not-for-profit health system providing mental health and substance use disorder treatments. Services are available nationally through the operation of outpatient clinics, residential programs, the use of telehealth and an inpatient hospital. Centerstone also features specialized programs for the military community, therapeutic foster care, children's services and employee assistance programs. Centerstone's Research Institute provides guidance through research and technology, leveraging the best practices for use in all our communities. Centerstone's Foundation secures philanthropic resources to support the work and mission of delivering care that changes people's lives.