

News Release

Dobbs Ferry High School, Middle School and Springhurst Earn “No Place For Hate” Designation From Anti-Defamation League

All three schools garner “Gold Star” distinction

Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. May 14, 2015-- Dobbs Ferry High School, Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Springhurst Elementary School have each been officially recognized by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for creating a culture of respect within their buildings and classrooms thereby earning them the special No Place for Hate (NPFH) designation. In compliance with the New York State Dignity for All Students (DASA) Act, No Place For Hate offers the opportunity for schools to be recognized for their staff development and student training related to bullying, harassment and discrimination. There is only one other school community in Westchester County that can call itself a No Place For Hate “District”, and only three school districts that have this distinction in New York State.

All three Dobbs Ferry schools also received Gold Star honors and a personalized banner, which is awarded to those who have gone above and beyond with their diversity education activities within the school year. “This important designation is acknowledgment of our District's ongoing commitment to ensuring that our schools are safe and supportive learning environments for all students and staff,” said Doug Berry, Dobbs Ferry School District Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

For a school to merit the No Place For Hate distinction, it must have an established NPFH committee and engage the majority of its students in at least three anti-bias activities that promote a positive school culture throughout the year. Springhurst Assistant Principal Lisa Doty, Middle School Assistant Principal Anne Pecunia and High School Assistant Principal Candace Reim spearhead the building NPFH committees.

According to the NPFH guidelines, activities should:

- Address school-based issues
- Have a school-wide impact
- Focus on inclusivity and community
- Honor diversity and foster harmony
- Promote respect for individual and group differences
- Involve the students in the planning and implementation
- Involve ACTIVE learning
- Involve discussion
- Take place over both semesters and are spread out over time

At Springhurst, all students participated in the Building Bridges: Celebrating Differences program co-sponsored by the PTSA. The goals of this program are to increase students' knowledge and understanding of people with different abilities, to provide hands-on experiences that increase awareness and to develop empathy for the challenges these individuals face. The students also participated in "National No Name Calling Week" in January with Student Government reps visiting all the classrooms to screen a video and discuss how hurtful name calling can be. Posters from that activity are displayed in the school lobby. For National Stomp Out Bullying Week, students read the book "One" by Kathryn Otoshi, followed by grade-appropriate activities. In addition, 4th, 5th and Middle School 6th graders attended the play *The New Kid* performed by Random Farms Kids Theater, followed by a "talk back" with the cast about the production and bullying.

In the Middle School, all students learned about DASA regulations and signed the ADL No Place for Hate Resolution of Respect. In February, DFMS celebrated Black History Month with multiple activities. Each morning's news show of The Daily Dose highlighted many of the significant contributions made by African-Americans to society. Students took part in the "Who Am I Contest," where they researched a variety of prominent African-Americans culminating in a musical tribute at the Black History Month assembly. Eighth grade students also made original public service announcement videos about racism and the book they had read, *A Raisin In The Sun*. In addition, 8th graders conducted an in-depth study of the major issues and prominent people of the late 1950s and early 1960s including Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, segregation laws, Brown vs Board of Education and the Housing Segregation Act, to name a few.

The High School's Friends of Rachel (FOR) Club was instrumental in organizing STOMP OUT BULLYING: Blue Shirt Day as a District-wide event where everyone wears blue shirts in support of anti-bullying initiatives at each school. MAC Field Day, orchestrated by the Activities Branch of Student Government, also reinforced positive school culture and valuing the talents of all students. Outside speaker John Halligan, who spearheaded the Vermont Bully Prevention Bill, shared his son's heartbreaking story generating cyber-bullying discussions among students. This event was co-sponsored by DF Officer Justine Kamke and the Dobbs Ferry Youth Council. Every student eagerly signed the No Place For Hate pledge where they promised to promote acceptance and positivity.

"Our teachers, administrators and students share a commitment to understanding and being empathetic towards each person, recognizing and accepting our differences," said Erin Vredenburgh, Director of Special Education and DASA co-chair with Superintendent Dr. Lisa Brady. "From STOMP OUT BULLYING: Blue Shirt Day to Black History Month to Building Bridges: Celebrating Differences, and all our other initiatives, we are so fortunate to work in a District that embraces that we are all different and unique in our own special way."

This year, 85 schools in New York State and Northern New Jersey have been recognized, with over 60,000 students directly impacted by No Place For Hate activities. There are more than 1,600 schools that participate in the program nationwide. ADL (<http://newyork.adl.org/>) is dedicated to the mission of ending hatred, bigotry and prejudice toward all people and is committed to supporting and building inclusive and safe communities in our schools .

For more information, please contact:

Public Information Officer, Elizabeth Hausman (914) 693-1500 x3013