



The High School View

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School takes mental health day to promote service

By Julia Sadowski and Taylor Smith

Rather than learning about reading, writing, and arithmetic, regional high school students and teachers last Wednesday took time out from the regular school day to learn a bit more about themselves.

The special event, Wellness Day, was devoted to teaching students and adults how to better their lives and the lives of those around them. The day began with a moving talk by special needs educator Tony Lombardi. He spoke about the importance of service to others and the effects that serving others may have on a person's life.

Following Mr. Lombardi's talk, students could choose to attend one workshop followed by a wrap-up session with the student's monthly advisory group.

Although the focus of Mr. Lombardi's lecture was primarily devoted to encouraging students to serve others in need, he did incorporate some of his own experiences. "Tony did an outstanding job talking about how service can enhance your life," said science department chair, Natalie Munn. "It was wonderful of him to share his personal struggles with us as a



Tony Lombardi (left) lectures students on the importance of service while students learn yoga (right) as part of the high school's first Wellness day.



PHOTOS BY TOVA KATZMAN

way of helping us think about what each of us can do to help others."

Wellness Day coordinator and high school adjustment counselor, Amy Lilavois, was also pleased with the day. "It's really a snapshot of this entire community. It's great that the students stepped forward," she said.

The other main component of the day, the workshops, varied greatly in theme, and covered everything from depression, to posture and health, to yoga. For

many, the workshops gave them an opportunity to take a look at their lives from a more objective standpoint.

"We get out of our own privilege box," said Scott Fitzmaurice who traveled to the Vineyard to facilitate a workshop called Diversity: What's It to Me? "It's nice to talk about power and privilege."

Although a student's wellness is not exactly tested on the SAT, numerous students and faculty members agree that it is important to have something like Wellness Day

incorporated into the school curriculum.

Said assistant principal Carlin Hart, "Education is important, but so is taking care of yourself, making the right choices in life, and service. I don't think enough people are involved in service. For me anyway, the sessions I attended were pretty powerful."

The original Wellness Day agenda included a keynote presentation by founder and former executive director of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Bob

Anastas. However, due to weather related issues, Mr. Anastas cancelled the day before the event. Left without a keynote speaker, Ms. Lilavois turned to Tony Lombardi.

Mr. Lombardi shared his personal experiences involving HIV and AIDS with students in hopes that his life experiences would help students realize how important it is for all of us to help and try to make a difference. "The idea of passing on the concept of service is like gold in your hands," said Mr. Lombardi. "You shouldn't have to wait until you're older to know that."

Mr. Lombardi has traveled all over the United States and Africa, raising awareness about AIDS and says he can see potential in the current generation to make a difference now. "There are more kids now serving than ever before," said Mr. Lombardi. "The one thing I know for certain is this generation is more prime to making a difference."

"I took the Russian discussion, which was a little over an hour," said senior Madison Ibsen. "We mostly talked about the Brazilian table at lunch, but at first we talked about broader diversity and race issues, and eventually narrowed it down to our school. I liked Wellness Day. I thought it was good. I think it appeals to kids more if there are people their own age talking to them. It's a lot more effective coming from people who make it more relatable."

Annual concert highlights spirit of the season



PHOTOS BY TAYLOR SMITH

Minnesingers sing at the Old Whaling Church last Friday evening, one of the she shows the group performed.

By Caitlyn Clark

Holiday spirits descended upon hundreds of Islanders last weekend at the Whaling Church in Edgartown in the form of high school Minnesingers. Directed by

music teacher Janis Wightman, the annual winter concert helped a packed house to welcome in the holiday season by filling the Whaling Church with inspiring seasonal songs of joy and hope.

For some Minnesingers it was their first holiday concert. "It was great," said senior Alex Roan. "It was sad because it was my first and last Christmas concert, and I would have loved to do it again

next year. But I had a ton of fun. The energy was great between all of us. After the show I just wanted to go caroling, but it was ten at night so I decided against it. I think everyone else would say they

feel the same way."

Other members seemed to agree. "Well this was my first year as a Minnesinger, so I was really excited for my first concert," said sophomore Haley Hewson. "I think that it went really well, and that everyone had a lot of fun. My favorite songs to perform were definitely It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year and Santa Clause Is Coming to Town because they were so upbeat and fun to perform, and everyone knew the songs and could sing along with them, which made it fun for the audience. I also really liked Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, which was the song that the girls sang."

Every year, Minnesingers alumni join in for the last two pieces, Hallelujah and Santa Clause Is Coming to Town. All proceeds benefit the high school's Minnesingers spring trip and the Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust, Inc. Peace.

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