



The High School View

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Peers retreat then return



PHOTO BY SOPHIE LEW

(left to right): Students Greyson Bowker, Olivia Hart, Whitney O'Brien, Maxwell Martin, Erik Dolliver, and teacher Amy Wallace struggle to untangle themselves from a human knot. A selected group of 44 students and 4 faculty met at the Hebrew Center for a two-day Peer Outreach Retreat. The retreat was run by Amy Lilavois and Mike McCarthy along with returning senior class members. The retreat focused on training students, who were voted by their peers as trusted friends, to be able to help other students deal with their issues. Different activities included role plays where students would take turns acting as the troubled student and the counselor, trust activities such as guided trust tours where one partner would be guided with their eyes closed, and many group discussions. Students learned tactics to help guide friends.

Students lend a hand and a hat

By Paul Bagnall

Four students wrapped up the holiday season with gifts of warmth for those who may be out in the cold.

Organized by junior Abby Larsen, juniors Julia Sadowski, Meghan Pettit, and Ashley Drake set up donation boxes in order to collect hats, gloves, and money for the homeless.

"We really wanted to help out the less fortunate and make a difference," said Abby.

The fundraiser started on Monday, December 8. The students put donation boxes inside the Chilmark School, the Chilmark library, the high school's front of fice, and Alley's General Store in West Tisbury.

The donations collected went to two homeless shelters in South Boston—Women's Lunch Place and Saint Francis House.

The students decided to fundraise in order to get more involved with the community and find more opportunities to help

others.

"It's the right thing to do," said Meghan. "Someday you might be in the same situation and want someone to help you."

When the fundraiser came to a close on Friday, December 19, the students had collected approximately \$200 and collected 80 sets of hats and gloves for the charity.

"We couldn't be happier with the outcome," said Abby.

Her friends and family had similar reactions. When the school vacation began, Abby, Julia, Ashley, Mrs. Larsen and Jill Ronsenkranz, a special education teacher at the Chilmark school, travelled to Boston on Monday, December 22.

The students were given a tour of the Women's Lunch Place, which is a day center that provides services such as meals and a place to sleep.

"It gave us a better understanding of where the donations were actually going and how important the cause is," said Abby.

The experience at the St. Francis

House was different from the experience at the Women's Lunch Place.

"St. Francis was more intense for us," said Julia. "There was more security there. We had to go through metal detectors, which was a little daunting. But in the end, we felt like we accomplished something good."

The students showed how much hard work and commitment goes into fundraising for charities.

"It felt good to make a difference and do something about poverty," said Abby. "It was sad to see how many people really are homeless. It was nice to be doing something for people who are less fortunate."

"It really hit home how important this was when we went up to Boston," said Julia. "It had just snowed and the icy wind cut right through your clothes. I cannot imagine living out on the street without enough to wear."

"I would like to do it again," said Abby. "It felt good to be doing something nice and not getting a reward."

Foster parents fill need

By Chelsea Counsell

"The pain of giving back a child to their parent is like a death. But of course it's worth it. The time you have with a child is more precious because it is not permanent. You just have to overlook the pain," said regional high school English teacher Cynthia Cowan, one of the foster parents working at the high school.

There are three people at the regional high school who have welcomed foster children into their homes—Ms. Cowan, guidance counselor Mary MacDonald, and Attendance Secretary Inez Montanile.

Some of them take in children they have never met through the Department of Children and Families. Other foster children they have come to know through contact with them at the school.

A major force prompting some of the teachers to become foster parents is a connection with the kids. "I'm not married, and when I started I was all by myself," said Ms. Cowan. "I wanted to take care of someone."

"A lot of kids fall through the cracks and don't get enough attention," said Mrs. Montanile, who took in Sandy, her foster child, when Sandy was a junior at the high school.

"She came here as a freshman, from El Salvador," said Ms. Montanile. "She didn't know a word of English."

Sometimes the foster children come from desperate family situations. "They have been living a life of upheaval," said Ms. Cowan.

Certainly, there is a shortage of foster parents on the Island.

"Probably because parenting your own kids is hard," said Mrs. MacDonald. "I only did it because I knew the young woman well. She was one of my caseload students. I saw her potential, but she was struggling."

Despite the challenges of caring for a child in need, many of the adults at the high school have chosen to make a difference.

Sometimes uncanny resemblances develop between the foster parents and the foster children. Mrs. Montanile remembers a cherished memory with her daughter in the kitchen. "Sandy makes really good pizza. She taught me how to make it, and I'm italian!"

The bonds that develop between the foster parents and children is usually very strong. Ms. Cowan remembers one of her foster children who has now been returned to the biological mother. She said, "At one point, I had a girl for three years. She was calling me 'Mommy' by the end of it."

Vineyard hockey wins 2-1



PHOTO BY HALEY KOORSE

The boys varsity hockey team rejoices after a 2-1 victory over Bridgewater-Raynham Saturday, January 3. Seniors Tad Gold and Matt Flynn scored the two goals. The team currently holds a 5-1-1 record. Their next home game will be Saturday, January 10, at 7 pm.