Youth Justice Challenge: Parkside High School Proposal Summary

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Over the past year, student members of the Parkside Against Violence committee (PAVEAT) witnessed countless acts of violence, bullying and harassment. Consequently, it became evident that Parkside High School needed practical solutions to dealing with difficult social situations. By entering the Canadian Justice Department's Youth Justice Challenge, Parkside was given the opportunity to obtain the funds necessary in order to develop these initiatives into a school-wide anti-violence program. As the first place winner of the provincial competition, a total of \$9,000 will be provided for Parkside's project, distributed over the next two years. The Youth Justice Challenge plan for 2003-2005 will focus primarily on bullying prevention. It will be implemented by PAVEAT, which consists of approximately twenty students in Grades 9-12 who meet regularly to work towards the eradication of violence. The project was developed by the 2002-2003 president, Eva Treumuth, with the assistance of the then vice-president and current president, Correen Smith.

The Youth Justice Challenge project aims to provide a tangible form of educational material for students, appealing directly to the student body through creative, visual presentations and to afford committee members educational opportunities through international networking.

The first component of the project is a video, in which PAVEAT members plan, shoot and edit a film depicting bullying as it occurs in a high school setting. The film will present positive coping strategies and will focus on real solutions to situations which occur on a regular basis.

The second element of the plan is the use of twice yearly school assemblies to present issues such as bullying, sexual abuse and male violence. In addition, twice a year, PAVEAT will organize theatrical presentations to fellow students, addressing similar issues.

The last component of the proposal will see several PAVEAT members attend an international peace-building conference in Edmonton, Alberta in November 2003. This will provide an opportunity to network with students from other communities and expand project initiatives. In combination, these four elements will educate students about important, timely social issues and motivate them towards creating positive changes within the school environment and community.

Parkside Against Violence Everywhere Advocating its Termination

In 1996, Dan James, a Grade 11 student of Parkside High School proposed the idea of forming a school anti-violence group. The aim of this group would be to involve students in projects which would raise awareness and educate the school and community

about violence and non-violent conflict resolution.

Since its inception, PAVEAT has been active in numerous initiatives. The PEP program, (Peers Empowering Peers) has been very effective in introducing Grade 9 students to positive peer mentoring. Other activities have included annual participation in the Walk Against Male Violence, toy and clothing drives in support of our local women's shelters and attendance at international youth peace conferences. PAVEAT has also co-ordinated full school anti-violence symposiums and assemblies involving over 50 guest presenters and has brought educational theatrical productions like "Bullyproof" to Parkside. Our students have also been involved in peer mediation and non-violent conflict resolution training. At present, PAVEAT president, Corrine Smith and two other members are preparing to attend the RESOLVE IT youth conference in Edmonton.

The students of PAVEAT are a vital force for positive change. Members of PAVEAT also serve as student representatives on the School Environment Improvement Committee, chaired by Mary Themeles. They have been involved in conducting a school-wide violence survey of students and staff. The results of this survey will help direct the group towards developing and implementing a school-wide anti-violence policy which will directly address such issues as bullying and harassment. It is our hope that such a policy, created by students for students will be a valuable resource for teachers and administrators across the board.

Editor's Note: Parkside High School is located in Dundas, Ontario, Canada.