

# THE TORCH

## CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

September 2007

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

Another school year has started and we are looking forward to seeing new and old faces alike as we gear up for our fall trainings of faculty and community advisors and students around the state. In this issue of *The Torch*, you will find information about the upcoming trainings, a new book in The Book Corner, a grant opportunity, house keeping matters, the Team Builder of the Month, and much more.



**First Things First: Debi Gray has a new name and address!!**

Returning veterans know Debi Gray as the do-it-all, get-it-done, go-to person who mans the CRTP office at the Attorney General's Office in Augusta. Those of you new to the project will soon come to appreciate the energy, good humor and efficiency that Debi brings to the CRTP as its Project Administrator. However, Debi is no longer Debi Lettre. Debi has reverted to using her maiden name and is now Debi Lettre ("Leh - tree"). Her new email address is [Debi.Lettre@maine.gov](mailto:Debi.Lettre@maine.gov). Debi can also be reached by phone at 626-8856.



### On the road again... with the regional fall trainings

September brings the advent of our annual road show of regional trainings for advisors and team members. The registration packets were mailed to your schools in August so please take a moment to retrieve the packet from your mail pile if you have not already done so. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your registrations.

### Advisor trainings

We are very pleased that Hardy Girls Healthy Women has agreed to provide us with a keynote speaker for each of our faculty/community advisor trainings this fall. As many of you may already know, Hardy Girls Healthy Women is a widely acclaimed nonprofit organization based in Waterville "dedicated to creating strong and healthy girls by developing safe places to explore life and push the limits."

Also included in the advisor training sessions will be an orientation for new advisors, updates on changes in the Civil Rights Team Project, a "Project of the Month" presentation to help jump start your year and keep your team moving throughout the months ahead, time to network with advisors from other schools, and much more.

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### **Faculty Training Dates/Locations**

**September 24: Regional FA/CA training, UMaine, Orono.**

**September 26: Regional FA/CA training, Saco Holiday Inn Express.**

**September 28: Regional FA/CA training, Calumet Club, Augusta.**

**If you are unable to attend your regional training, you are free to attend a training in another region if your schedule allows. Be sure and note on your registration form if you will be attending a training outside of your region.**

### **Team/Student Trainings**

We had such overwhelmingly positive responses to the training sessions developed last year by former King Middle School advisor Kelley McDaniel and Manchester Elementary advisor Barb Maurais, that we went back to the well and asked them to develop more training sessions for us this year. We are thrilled that both Barb and Kelley agreed to our requests.

For the elementary school teams, Barb is developing a Words Hurt presentation that is based on the (free) Don't Laugh at Me video and accompanying song materials. Advisors will be able to take home a complete presentation packet for use in their own schools. The second session created by Barb will involve students learning a series of diversity cooperative games that show us what we all have in common.

The third elementary school session will be led by CRTP director Thom Harnett. Thom wrote a book about a true story that affected him a great deal in the work that he does

with the Civil Rights Team Project. He has created a wonderful project around the book that teams will learn about at the training and that they can easily take back to their schools and lead on their own.

Kelley is developing the middle and high school sessions and recently provided a brief description of each of the sessions she is working on. Those of you who enjoyed the focus on body image issues in the June issue of *The Torch* will be pleased to know that one of the student training sessions will be centered around reshaping body image & re-defining beauty. This session will invite participants to consider social prejudices regarding body shapes and sizes and contemporary western world images of health and beauty. Kelley will also describe a follow-up activity that can be done in your school that allows your team to highlight these issues in a very creative way.

Kelley has also developed middle and high school versions of *Watch Your Language Game*. This game invites teams to figure out the contemporary meanings and the origins of a series of historically prejudicial words and phrases. The follow-up activity encourages teams to create their own *Watch Your Language* games with prejudicial language common in their own schools and communities. The goal is not only to dissuade students from using certain language, but to educate them on the actual meaning of words and phrases that they are using.

The third session allows students to experience fairness and unfairness in an activity where half of the students receive high quality resources and half have inadequate resources, all to create the same assigned project. The focus of the follow-up

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discussion is the emotional and social impact of privilege and equity. There will be a follow-up activity suggestion for this session as well.

We are very excited over the prospect of providing you and your students with these wonderful training sessions.

As always, if you are planning on attending a training, please do not delay in registering. If you will **not** be attending a faculty/community advisor training or bringing your students to a team training, please let Debi know as soon as possible. This is particularly important with respect to student trainings as many schools have more than 15 students who would like to attend the training. Debi can allocate unused slots to those schools if she is made aware of them far enough in advance of the training date.

### Student/Team Training Dates

**October 5 (Friday): UMF, Olsen Student Center (MS and HS)**

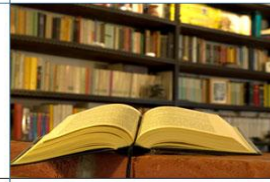
**October 11 & 12 (Thursday and Friday): Brewer Auditorium (ES, MS and HS)(ES Friday only)**

**October 29 & 30: (Monday and Tuesday): Augusta Civic Center, Augusta (ES, MS and HS)(ES Monday only)**

**November 29 (Thursday): Keddy's, Presque Isle (MS and HS)**

The greater Portland/York County regional training has yet to be scheduled due to difficulty in securing a location that can comfortably accommodate our needs and numbers. We will announce

**the date and location of that training as soon as we have that information.**



*And In The Book Corner, check out:*



This month we are recommending the book ***Our Friendship Rules***, by Peggy Moss and Dee Dee Tardif. Appropriate for elementary and middle school students, ***Our Friendship Rules*** deals beautifully with the subject of betrayal, the value of friendship and the path to one friendship's resurrection.

As one reader stated: "It's pretty easy to join the cool crowd. All you have to do is ditch your best friend..." "This is a book any girl can relate to, not just because a friendship breaks apart, but because the girls figure out a way to stay together. It's a great model for what should happen in real life." **Maya Brown**, age 12.

**Lyn Mikel Brown**, Maya Brown's mother and highly acclaimed educator, author and co-founder of Hardy Girls

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Healthy Women, also weighed in on ***Our Friendship Rules***. "We all make mistakes. We become better people when we learn from them. I love this story because **Peggy Moss** and **Dee Dee Tardif** reject one-dimensional "mean girls." Instead they offer us a real girl who does something she regrets, who recognizes the sadness, loss and hurt she inflicts, and who is granted a great gift – the joy of knowing a friend's forgiveness. This should be a lesson to us all."

Your team can easily use ***Our Friendship Rules*** as the centerpiece for discussions around how students treat one another, the value of friendships and how to get along. Go to [http://www.tilburyhouse.com/Children%27s%20Frames/child\\_friendship\\_rules.html](http://www.tilburyhouse.com/Children%27s%20Frames/child_friendship_rules.html) for some great ways to generate constructive discussion around the issues raised in ***Our Friendship Rules***.

For more information about this book, go to: [www.SaySomethingNow.com](http://www.SaySomethingNow.com); [www.amazon.com/Our-Friendship-Rules-Peggy-Moss/dp/088448291X](http://www.amazon.com/Our-Friendship-Rules-Peggy-Moss/dp/088448291X); or to the Tilbury House address listed above.

Those of you who have been with the project since its inception may remember Peggy Moss from her former role as an Maine assistant attorney general who worked with the Civil Rights Team Project as a trainer and community advisor. ***Our Friendship Rules***, Peggy's second children's book, follows her award winning book ***Say Something***.



### Speaking of Hardy Girls Healthy Women....

Hardy Girls Healthy Women is sponsoring what looks to be an excellent day long conference on November 5<sup>th</sup> in Portland. Titled ***Beyond Bully Prevention: Strategies That Work***, the conference is designed for teachers, school counselors, school social workers, administrators, and all adults who work with youth.

According to the HGHW web site:

*This conference moves beyond popular notions of bully prevention that overlook school experiences that make children and adolescents feel unsafe. The conference brings together experts in the field of adolescent development to discuss bullying as an educational hindrance and work out strategies to address the social factors that produce it.*

*Workshop topics will include girlfighting/ building girl allies, relationships between stereotypical masculinity, violence and boys' academic success, bias-based harassment of GLBTQ youth, the effects of sexist and racist media messages, the impact of poverty and*

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*social class on students' school experiences, and the misuse of technology and cyber-bullying.*

In short, this conference will address topics that are highly relevant to the mission of the CRTP and that many of you deal with on a day to day basis in your own schools. Hardy Girls Healthy Women has a well-deserved national reputation in the field of adolescent girls and we are fortunate to be hosting this cutting edge conference in Maine.

**For more information on this conference, please send an email to [info@hghw.org](mailto:info@hghw.org).**

*The following article is reprinted from the September 2006 Torch. It is repeated in this issue because grant opportunities are scarce and this one is right down our collective alley.*



### **Grant Opportunity For All Schools**

Here is a grant opportunity that all of you are eligible to apply for.\* *Mix It Up*, a project of the [Southern Poverty Law Center's](#) Teaching Tolerance program, provides \$500 grants to schools for youth-directed programs and projects that address social

boundaries in schools or communities. The only guidelines are:

- Youth must serve as decision-makers in the project. Ideally, the project is created and implemented by youth.
- Projects must promote collaboration across social boundaries — different youth groups, clubs or community groups working together.
- The project or program should be a part of an ongoing effort, or an effort that's just getting started, but will continue.
- Grants are non-renewable.

*Mix it Up's* site states that it is open to new ideas and urges applicants to be creative. The only project that is not eligible for the grant money is *Mix It Up Day*. Click on [www.tolerance.org/teens/about.jsp](http://www.tolerance.org/teens/about.jsp) to read more about *Mix It Up* and its belief in the power of youth to create and sustain real change.

This is a great opportunity to motivate your team members to put their heads together and come up with a creative proposal for a project or program in your school or community. Please let us know if you are successful in obtaining this grant money and we will include a

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description of your project in a future issue of *The Torch*.

**FYI ADVISORS:** Even if you do not apply for a grant through *Mix It Up*, consider signing up for its monthly newsletter. Updates on what other student activists are doing to create more inclusive environments in their school as well as new *Mix It Up* activities are regular features of this e-newsletter. Subscribe now by clicking on [www.tolerance.org/teens/getnewsletter.jsp](http://www.tolerance.org/teens/getnewsletter.jsp).

*[Editor's note: Although this program is listed under "teens" at the Teaching Tolerance site, there is nothing in the grant information materials that suggests that it is limited.]*



### **Ch-ch-ch-changes... in the Civil Rights Team Project**

There have been changes this summer on the administrative end of the Civil Rights Team Project. As faculty advisors will learn more about at the fall trainings, the CRTP is no longer using a network of part time regional coordinators to work with schools. The

CRTP has changed and grown over the past eleven years to the point where another full time person is desperately needed. The regional coordinator system was eliminated in order to make it possible for the new position to be created. Schools will still receive support and resources from the CRTP. However, all services will be provided by someone working full time to support the schools in the Project and to further the mission of the CRTP around the state.

We hope that this change results in an even higher level of service to participating schools. We also want to give our thanks to everybody who served as a Regional Coordinator over the last 11 years.

The new staff member has not yet been hired, but in the mean time do not hesitate to ask for assistance from CRTP director Thom Harnett ([thomas.harnett@maine.gov](mailto:thomas.harnett@maine.gov)) or CRTP Project Administrator Debi Lettre ([debi.lettre@maine.gov](mailto:debi.lettre@maine.gov)).

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### רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה

This month also marks the advent of the Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement. The Jewish New Year, called Rosh Hashanah, begins at sundown on September 12 and ends at night fall on September 14. Rosh Hashanah marks a period of introspection when Jews look back on the past year and begin planning the changes to make in the new year. No work is done on Rosh Hashanah and many observant Jews spend this holiday in their synagogue. It is common for observant Jewish students to be absent from school for this holiday, which is considered one of the most holy days of the Jewish year.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, follows Rosh Hashanah. This year, Yom Kippur begins at sundown on September 21 and ends at night fall on the following day. Yom Kippur is a day to atone for sins committed between yourself and God. Observant Jews do not work, eat or drink (including water) for the 25 hour period that is Yom Kippur. Jewish students are frequently absent from school during this “high holiday” as well.

These holidays are referred to as “the high holidays” because of their importance to Jews. Many people believe that Hanukkah is the most important Jewish

holiday because it usually falls near Christmas, one of the holiest days on the Christian calendar. However, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are much more significant religious holidays for Jewish families than Hanukkah which is why your Jewish students are usually absent from school and unable to participate in any school sponsored events on these days. Schools are encouraged not to schedule important events on the high holidays so that Jewish students are not excluded from participation.



### September 15-October 15 is National Hispanic Heritage Month

National Hispanic Heritage Month runs from September 15 through October 15. This is a tough “heritage month” for CRT’s to do justice to given that it begins only two weeks after the start of school and well before some teams get started for the year. However, for those teams that are already on the move, there are some good web

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sites with a variety of interesting ways to celebrate the contributions of Hispanic culture to our country.

Education World, at [www.education-world.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson203.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson203.shtml), has a lot of different types of activities for all ages. An easy one with universal appeal is to create a bulletin board or posters to hang around your school of English words that are Hispanic in origin. The list is surprisingly long and contains some interesting surprises. Go to <http://www.factmonster.com/spot/spanishwords1.html> to get started on this activity. If you would like to have one word of Hispanic origin for each letter of the alphabet, go to <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/List%20of%20English%20words%20of%20Spanish%20origin>. (And yes, the last word is “zorro”, which means “fox!”) For other ideas, check out the resources at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/> and <http://www.history.com/classroom/hhm/>.



### Newsflash: We need to know who you are!

Has your school had a change in faculty or community advisor? Are you a brand new advisor? Please let Debi Lettre know any changes in the names and contact information for your school's faculty and/or community advisor so she can keep her database updated. The CRTP relies heavily on both email and snail mail so it is critically important that we know who you are and how to reach you.

If your school is beginning the new year without a faculty advisor, please apprise Debi of this fact as well. And please remember, not only do schools that participate in the Civil Rights Team Project have a contractual obligation to provide a faculty advisor, it is important that new faculty advisors are recruited as soon as possible in order to ensure that teams are formed in time to attend the regional fall trainings that will take place later this month.



### Team Building Tip of the Month



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For those of you who will be getting your team up and running this month, here is a team building tip to help get your team up and running *together*.

### The Bean Bag Toss Game

**Objective:** Help team members share some personal information about themselves and hopefully find things of common interest about each other. This is as much an ice breaker as it is a team builder.

**Materials:** A beanie baby or some other item that can safely be tossed from team member to team member.

**Directions:** Arrange team members in one or more circles of no more than 8 people if possible. Begin by tossing the beanie baby back and forth to random members of the circle. Then the moderator begins calling out the information team members are to solicit from each other as they toss the object. For example: when the moderator calls out "Your Name," the tosser says his or her name as he/she tosses the object to someone in the circle. Continue until members of the circle have some familiarity with each other's names, then switch to the next topic. If the moderator calls out "the Catcher's name," the tosser must say the name of the person to whom he/she is tossing the object. If the moderator calls out "the Tossers name," the person who catches the object must say the name of the person who threw it to him/her.

Go through a selection of other topics for approximately ten minutes.

### Suggested topics:

Your name

The tosser's name

The catcher's name

Your favorite past time/hobby

Your favorite subject in school

Your least favorite subject in school

Something you are good at

Something you are not very good at

Something you would like to be GREAT at

One of your chores at home

How many brothers and/or sisters you have

Your favorite food

Your least favorite food

**Discussion Questions:** Do you know everyone's name now?

What did you learn about other team members? Describe.

Did you learn things that you would not have guessed about some people? Describe.



### Do You Need a Tool Box?

The CRTP provides each participating school with a large plastic storage container [a/k/a The Tool Box] that houses a multitude of resources for you and your team. Depending upon the grade levels of your team, your Tool Box may contain books, videos and teaching materials. All of the Tool Boxes contain organized, labeled folders of resource information. There is a table of contents in the first folder and it sets out in detail everything that is included in your Tool Box.

You and your team are encouraged to dive headfirst into your Tool Box. Invite your new team members to drop by your room or office to look through the Tool Box when they have some spare time or have a couple

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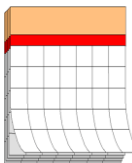
of volunteers take on the task of going through the Tool Box for ideas on things to do over the course of the school year. However you choose to utilize the Tool Box, remember that its purpose is to assist you and your team so that you do not feel that you need to constantly be re-inventing the wheel. We publish a monthly issue of *The Torch* for that same reason.

**Those of you who do not have a Tool Box should contact Debi Lettre. There are some currently available and they will be distributed on a first come/first served basis.**



### **Mark Your Calendar for the 2008 Statewide Conference!**

The Augusta Civic Center has been reserved for **Friday, May 16th** for the 2008 CRTP Statewide Conference. We are announcing this date eight months in advance of the date in order to give you as much time as possible to save the date, reserve the bus, and make arrangements for substitutes.



### **UPCOMING EVENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DATES**

**September 15-October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month**

**September 24: Regional FA/CA training, UMaine, Orono.**

**September 26: Regional FA/CA training, Saco Holiday Inn Express.**

**September 28: Regional FA/CA training, Calumet Club, Augusta.**

**October 5-30: Regional Student Trainings, Statewide locations.**

**November 29<sup>th</sup> Aroostook County Team Training in Presque Isle.**

**November 5: *Beyond Bully Prevention: Strategies That Work, Portland.* Sponsored by Hardy Girls Healthy Women. Contact [info@hghw.org](mailto:info@hghw.org) for more information.**

**November 13: National Mix It Up at Lunch Day.** Go to [www.tolerance.org/teach/mix\\_it\\_up/index.jsp](http://www.tolerance.org/teach/mix_it_up/index.jsp) for constructive ideas for your Mix It Up Day project.

**January 21, 2008: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.**

**January 21-25, 2008: No Name Calling Week.** Go to [www.nonamecallingweek.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home.html](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home.html) for information on how to bring this important event to your school.

**May 16, 2008: CRTP Statewide Conference, Augusta Civic Center.**

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*This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a statewide program under the auspices of the Maine Office of the Attorney General. The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of high school, middle school and elementary school students and to reduce the incidence of bias-motivated harassment and violence in schools.*

*G. Steven Rowe --- Attorney General  
Thomas A. Harnett, AAG, Civil Rights Education & Enforcement Unit & Director of the CRTP  
Debi Lettre, Civil Rights Project Administrator*