

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February 2006

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

Thanks to those of you who expressed enthusiasm over the first issue of the newsletter. The newsletter is now officially ***The Torch*** and we hope it helps to keep the spark lit in teams around the state. This issue contains thoughts on how to celebrate Women's History Month, a fundraising suggestion, the Speaker of the Month, the Ice Breaker of the Month and much more.

Need more time for your team meetings? Try a Lock In!

You aren't alone if you and your team members find yourselves struggling to find time when everyone can get together, not just to plan projects, but simply to get to know each other. The work that we do is a challenge and even more so when team members don't know each other or, in some cases, have qualms about getting to know some members of the team. While a few teams have managed full day retreats away from school, most teams simply try to make do and hope for the best.

One way to tackle this problem head on is with a Lock In. A typical lock in consists of team members, advisors and possibly a couple of good sport parents bunking in for the night in the school gym. The team fills the evening hours with fun ice breaker and team building activities, planning time, work on a project and a movie. In some cases, a semester's worth of work, both in building personal relationships and team activities can be accomplished in a single evening. Breaking down the walls that may exist between team members can be one of the greatest accomplishments of a Lock In night.

The Brunswick Middle School team had their Lock In on December 3rd. According to

FA Nancy Guest, "We did some team building on our outdoor ropes course, developed two skits, designed and voted on t-shirts and wrist bands. We also made posters for our hallways, ate plenty of food, watched movies and a few night owls danced to music into the wee hours." So, if you are looking for a great way to help team members to bond and to work on team activities, a Lock In might just be in order.

Another good idea when holding a lock in, assembly or any civil rights team event is to contact your local press. Local newspapers and television stations are often very interested in what students are doing in their schools. In fact, the Brunswick JHS lock in and school-wide assembly that the CRTeam organized were covered by the *The Times Record* and can be seen at the link:

<http://www.timesrecord.com/website/main.nsf/news.nsf/0/CF52B9CFCABE69940525710D005A3AD2?Opendocument>

March is Women's History Month



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March is Women's History Month, a time to celebrate the achievements of women. Whether in the area of education, employment, or sports, women have come a long way over just the last 50 years. The biggest accomplishment was the gift of "choice" to girls and young women: The choice to have a career; the choice to work in fields historically dominated by men; the choice to have children; or even the choice to play on a sports team with the same financial support as the boys' teams.

Today's girls and young women don't know a time when choice was a privilege and not a right. This in itself is worthy of celebration. It is equally worthy to celebrate the people who gave that gift to our youth, hence our observance of Women's History Month.

Here are some suggestions of ways to observe Women's History Month in your school and, perhaps more importantly, to promote the *continued* progress of young women.

Promote Math and Science to Girls. If more students, especially girls, knew of the incredible range of careers that are now available to them, it might be harder to say about math and science, "I'm never going to need them, so why bother taking them?" According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the only fields growing faster than software engineering are medical assistants and home health aides. For that reason alone, here are a few items that focus on math and science in hopes of opening some eyes to opportunities that are there for the taking.

Challenge all the students in your school to explore *Astroventure*, an educational, interactive, multi-media web environment

highlighting NASA careers and astrobiology research in the areas of Geology, Biology, Astronomy and Atmospheric Sciences. Students in grades 5-8 are transported to the future where they role play NASA occupations and scientific inquiry as they search for and build a planet with the necessary characteristics for human habitation. Supporting activities include webcasts and chats with NASA experts, online collaborations, classroom lessons, student publishing areas and career fact sheets. For more information, visit the website at <http://astroventure.arc.nasa.gov/>.

Math and Science Camp/ Nurture, Nature and Numbers: Make sure that all of your grades 5-9 girls know about the two week long *girls only* summer sessions focused on science, math and computers at the Maine School for Science and Mathematics in Limestone. (There are also two sessions for boys only.) Activities also include swimming, soccer, fencing and horseback riding. Each session is \$450 for overnight campers and \$400 for day campers. Financial aid is available. There are 110 slots per session. For more information, visit their website at www.mssm.org.

Publicize the existence of websites that address issues relevant to girls and young women. Some suggestions are:

- www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org: a site sponsored by a Maine organization by the same name and referred to as Hardy Girls. Hardy Girls is an organization based in Waterville. It has a tremendous website that provides information on the many programs they offer as well as information on issues of concern and interest to girls and young women. Their mission statement is as follows: *In creating hardiness zones for girls and women we know that just as plants*

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February 2006

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grow differently in different parts of Maine, Maine girls and women need different nutrients depending on whether they live in rural or urban communities, are economically secure or homeless, are native or immigrants, are white or of color. The programs we create move away from focusing on a single issue such as disordered eating or self esteem. Rather they focus on the social and political landscape in which girls are coming of age. Girls' and women's health will not improve until we change that landscape. This site is also a great source of information on events taking place in Maine of interest to girls and women.

- www.4girls.gov: Girl's Health is a website sponsored by the National Women's Health Information Center and provides relevant and current health information.

- www.girlpower.gov: a site sponsored by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services to encourage and motivate girls ages 9-13 to make the most of their lives.

- www.science.education.nih.gov/women/index.html: a site sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. This site provides free tools, including videos and poster sets designed to inspire young women to pursue scientific careers.

Post interesting facts about women and the workplace to encourage young women to think about the importance of getting an education, especially one that includes math and science. Go to www.academic.org for seven thought provoking facts about women and work.

Encourage students to watch *Mothers of Invention* on March 19th at 7 p.m. on The History Channel. Pique their interest by posing the question: "What do hang gliders, brown paper bags, windshield wipers,

Barbie dolls and liquid paper all have in common?" The answer is that all were invented by women. This documentary focuses on women who were not recognized for their very well known inventions, simply because they were women. Another interesting program on the History Channel, ***Founding Mothers***, will air on March 6th at 7pm. This program looks at the women who stood behind the founding fathers of our nation and how they influenced them.

Post a Timeline around school that lists the significant achievements of women through history. A good timeline can be found at www.historychannel.com. This website also has a comprehensive list of women who were "firsts" in their area of specialization. This list includes Maine's Joan Benoit Samuelson, who was the first woman to win an Olympic gold medal in the marathon.

Sponsor a Women's History Bee.

Have your team put together their own set of questions about women in history. Use information from the timeline or other information posted around school or shared over the PA during morning announcements. Hold the Bee at the end of the month and honor the winner on your bulletin board or in whatever way your team chooses.

Hold a team discussion session about the four women pictured on the first page of this newsletter. Discuss who each woman is and why their respective accomplishments are significant in the history of women. Talk about why their achievements would not have been possible even twenty years earlier.

Sponsor a speaker on women's issues.

For speakers about women in non-traditional

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February 2006

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

jobs: **Penny Plourde**, Maine Dept. of Labor, PO Box 259, Augusta, ME 04332-0259, Phone 624-6400; and **Elizabeth (Lib) Jamison, Women Unlimited**, 71 Winthrop Street, Augusta, ME 04330, Phone 621-6848, or 1-800-281-5259.

For speakers on other issues relevant to girls and young women: **Turn Beauty Inside Out Project, Aileen Fortune**, York County Cooperative Extension, 21 Bradeen Street, Suite 302, Springvale, ME 04083, Phone 324-2814 or 1-800-287-1535 (in Maine); **Lyn Mikel Brown, Lynn Cole, and Karen Heck, Hardy Girls Healthy Women**, 14 Common St, Waterville, ME 04901, 861-8131, www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org; **University of New England women's studies professors Elizabeth DeWolfe, edewolfe@une.edu** and **Jennifer Tuttle, jtuttle@une.edu** or call 283-0171; **Brenda Commander, Chief of the Houlton Band of the Maliseet Indians**, Phone 532-4273, toll free 1-800-564-8524 (in Maine); **Dale McCormick**, founder of Women Unlimited, former state lawmaker and State Treasurer and current Director of the Maine State Housing Authority, 353 Water Street, Augusta, ME 04330-4633, Phone 626-4600, toll free 1-800-452-4668 (in Maine); **Sarah Standiford, Executive Director and Lauralee Raymond, Director of Public Affairs, The Maine Women's Lobby**, PO Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347, Phone 622-0851, www.mainewomen.org. The Maine Women's Lobby is dedicated to legislative action on behalf of Maine women and girls and maintains the vision that women and girls should have economic security, access to health care, and freedom from violence and discrimination.

Ask your school librarian to create a display of books by and about women. One particularly good contemporary book is ***33 Things Every Girl Should Know***. This book is an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a must read for all girls. If your library does not have a copy, ask your librarian to place it on the "To Buy" list. For more information on this book, visit www.amazon.com.

2006 Women's History Resource Catalog. This catalog contains more resources for honoring and celebrating women than you could possibly want. It is published by National Women's History Project and contains everything from pencils to posters to books, board games and teen resources. Go to: www.nwhp.org.

You can also sponsor a showing of films that depict strong female characters. Some suggestions are: *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Whale Rider*, *Mona Lisa Smiles*, *Erin Brockovich*, and *The Color Purple*. Another suggestion is *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, a documentary about the most successful propaganda campaign in the history of the United States government. This film, which can be obtained through the interlibrary loan system, is a fascinating look at how the U.S. government recruited millions of American women into the industrial workforce during World War II, the lives of those women, and what happened to them after the war was over and the men returned home. For a lengthier description of this film and discussion questions, visit: www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/rosie.html.

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February 2006

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Quotes: This newsletter is refraining from suggesting that teams peruse lists of notable quotations by women for the simple fact that most of the lists contain numerous quotes that insult and degrade males. That seems counterproductive to what we are trying to accomplish.



The Golden Torch Award Congratulations to Windham HS!!

This month's Golden Torch Award goes to the Windham High School Civil Rights Team, which worked cooperatively to affect a change that will have a nationwide impact on gay and lesbian high school students.

Every year, the Windham HS National Honor Society sponsors a fundraiser by a company called iFlurtz. Students pay to fill out questionnaires that will hopefully result in their being "matched" with other students with similar interests. The questionnaires do not take into consideration that some students are seeking same sex matches, thereby effectively excluding gay and lesbian students from the fundraiser.

Windham CRT co-president Dustin Blake deemed this to be unfair and, with the full support of FA Pam Taylor and GSA advisor Ali Gardner, they addressed the issue with iFlurtz. The company responded by stating that it would be willing to make changes in its questionnaire in order to allow gay and lesbian students to participate and sought the assistance of Windham High School in formulating questions for iFlurtz future questionnaires. This is a great example of an significant change brought about by the thoughtful actions of committed young

people and the adults who support them. Nice work, Windham High School.



Web Resources: and speaking of Windham...

Elementary school teams should check out the new civil rights team website created by Manchester Elementary School advisor Barb Maurais. Their website, which is located at www.windham.k12.me.us, is truly a treasure chest of resources for both team members and faculty advisors, with links to other great age appropriate sites. This month there are also links to sites for Black History Month and three Black History Challenge Questions. One link that Barb's students especially love to click, is [Stop Bullying Now](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov), Games, Webisodes & Strategies to Stop Bullies! "Take a Stand-Lend a Hand." (That website can also be reached directly at www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov.) This is an excellent website for this age group.

If the resource is available to you, spending team time visiting Manchester Elementary School's website through your school's computer lab would be time well spent. This is a user friendly, informative site that will appeal to your team members and help them to learn about civil rights in a way that is fun and easy. You can reach their website at: www.windham.k12.me.us, click on *Manchester Elementary* (near the top of the screen), then click on *Civil Rights Team Website*.



Ice Breaker of the Month

Do you find that some members of your team spend the first minutes of precious meeting time chit chatting with each other,

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February 2006

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even after the meeting has officially begun? Turn this time-eating behavior into an ice breaker/team builder by starting your meetings with **“Good Thing/Bad Thing.”**

Take five minutes or so to go around to every member of the team and have them tell the group a good thing about their day and a bad thing about their day. In just a few short minutes, everyone has learned a little something about every team member. This exercise tends to grab everyone’s attention and also gives some of your quieter team members a chance to share information they might otherwise not have an opportunity to share.

Need a little cash?

If you are like most teams, you struggle for money to pay for things your team would like to have, whether it is t-shirts, materials for a project, or money for a speaker. One good fundraising idea that will quickly pay for the costs needed to get you started is a button maker.

Check out www.badgeaminit.com for a hand press kit for \$49.95. Making buttons together is a great team building activity and the buttons can be sold on special event days at school, to celebrate a particular event, or on an ongoing basis over the course of the year. Teams can decide what they want on their buttons and then sell them at a profit.

The Windham High School team has been doing this fundraiser for several years and they will be selling buttons at the school’s Winter Carnival. This fundraising activity provides visibility for the civil rights team, promotes school spirit and a positive school

environment and raises some money for the team in the process.



Speaker of the month.

Stan Davis

We are frequently asked by faculty advisors for practical strategies in dealing with students who bully or harass other students or who simply do not respond to the measures already utilized by the school. This month’s featured speaker, Stan Davis, has, in our experience, some of the best answers to those questions.

Since the mid-1990s, Stan Davis, a former civil rights marcher, social worker, and school counselor, has put his energies toward helping schools prevent bullying. Stan has trained schools all over the United States, but we are fortunate to have him call Maine home. His strategies are part of state-wide initiatives in Michigan, New Jersey, and West Virginia and many schools around Maine have welcomed Stan’s program into their communities.

Stan is a terrific presenter and his trainings integrate research, practical experience, specific techniques, storytelling, magic, and audience participation. His book, *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical Strategies to Reduce Bullying*, published in 2004, lives up to its name. Like Stan, it provides practical advice, based in large part on his own experiences, to help educators deal with all of the issues involved in addressing bullying in their schools.

Go to www.stopbullyingnow.com . Stan’s website provides a wealth of information

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

and resources for educators. While the Civil Rights Team Project is about much more than bullying, the existence of bullying, regardless of its motivation, is nonetheless a significant part of what causes school to not be a safe place for many of our students. Stan Davis' efforts in making our schools a safe place for every student parallels the mission of the Civil Rights Team Project and we highly recommend him as a presenter or trainer for your school. Visit his website for contact information.



National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week: February 6th - 10th

Although this newsletter will not reach you until the end of this week, this event, designated by Congress and sponsored by the American Bar Association, is worthy of mention, particularly in light of the approach of Women's History Month. Teen dating violence is a serious issue that affects many of the students in our schools. Statistics allege that one in four high school dating relationships involves verbal, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. Domestic violence is a very serious issue in Maine and not only because it was the leading cause of homicide in Maine in 2005.

Member agencies of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, www.mcedv.org, and the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mecasa.org, provide free, comprehensive school-based education about teen dating violence as well as victim services for youth and their parents.

Another resource is Caring Unlimited's school-based group called YAADA-Young

Adults Against Dating Abuse. (Caring Unlimited is a Southern Maine-based domestic abuse advocacy group.) You can help your school address the issue of teen dating violence by inviting YAADA into your school to speak and to work with your students. Caring Unlimited can be reached at 490-3227 or mail@caringunlimited.org.

As part of any work that you choose to do on gender issues, please consider working with school-based educators and advocates on this very important issue.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DATES

February: Black History Month. See the January newsletter for some ideas on how to commemorate this month.

Feb. 15: Black History Month lecture sponsored by the Portland Chapter of the NAACP. *Discovering Malaga Island: African American History in Maine.* Free and open to the public, 5:00 p.m., Luther Bonney Auditorium, USM, Portland.

March 2: Libby Roderick Concert, 7pm, Waterville Opera House, appropriate for all ages. For tickets, call the Waterville Opera House at 873-7000. Libby Roderick is an internationally acclaimed singer/songwriter, poet, activist, teacher and lifelong Alaskan. Her six recordings have received extensive airplay on Earth and, in 2003, NASA played her song "Dig Down Deep" on the planet Mars as encouragement to the robot "Spirit."

March 18: Self Defense Session For All Women and Girls, 2:00-3:30. Fourth degree black belt and seven-time A.A.U.

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February 2006

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

national champion, Julienne LeBrun Begin, will be providing instruction for any woman and girl on the art of self defense. Hosted by Hardy Girls, the session will take place at the Hardy Girls Resource Center located at 14 Common Street in Waterville. The fee is \$10 for women and \$5 for girls; scholarships are available. Members of the Blue Wave Dragons will give a 15-minute special demonstration. For more information, contact Hardy Girls Healthy Women info@hardygirlshealthywomen.org or 861-8131.

April 1: DUCC Conference, Waynflete School, Portland. This event is for Southern Maine high schools and consists of a day long program of speakers, workshops and discussions on issues of diversity and our communities. For more information, contact Waynflete School at 774-5721.

April 8: To Your Health Girls Unlimited! TechKNOW Girls in Health, Math, Science, and Technology, 9:15- 4:00, at the Kennebec Valley Community College. This is a tech conference just for girls.

May 8: Civil Rights Team Project Statewide Conference Augusta Civic Center.

This conference will celebrate the hard work done by civil rights team members around the state and will run from 8:30 – 2:00. The conference will offer a mix of educational opportunities and workshops that explore the diversity around us. The culturally diverse entertainment portion of the day will run from 12:30–2:00. Please plan on staying for the entire day as students have consistently told us how much they enjoy the closing sessions.



“Extra, Extra, Read All About It!”

Has your team just completed a successful project, read a great book, had a good fundraiser, listened to an inspiring speaker, seen a compelling video, or done something that was just plain fun that you would like to share with other teams? Send in a blurb to The Torch and we will include it in a future issue in a column dedicated to what’s happening around the State. Send your news to amy@maine.rr.com with the subject heading: Newsletter item.

ERROR:

The number given for Michael Wingfield in the January Newsletter is incorrect. The correct telephone number is 780-0234. Sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a state-wide 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—Director, Civil Rights
Education & Enforcement Unit
Debi Gray, Civil Rights Project Administrator