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BARNSTABLE COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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TO: Board of Regional Commissioners
Assembly of Delegates

RE: Human Rights Academy Report 2016

We are pleased to share with you the report from Barnstable County's Human Rights Academy teams. As you may know, every high school and middle school on Cape Cod is invited to attend the fall Human Rights Academy. There they learn about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, they also took part in a "speed-dating" round where each of twelve tables was hosted by a different social agency working on Cape Cod. (The agencies were chosen based on the concerns HRA students had shared with us last spring.) The agencies that generously donated their time to this event were Youth Street Reach, Gosnold on Cape Cod, A Baby Center, CHAMP Homes, Independence House, Thrive at CIGSYA, The Family Pantry, Brazilian Immigrant Center, Samaritans of Cape Cod, and Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled (CORD). In addition, Cape Cod Academy hosted a table to share how to organize a fundraising coffee house and Human Rights Commissioner Paul Houlihan discussed the challenge of clean water sources in developing countries.

The students were then challenged to develop their own human rights projects at their schools. As you'll see, they dove deeper into these subjects than ever before, including lobbying efforts in Boston and Washington. One team even traveled to Iowa to meet with presidential candidates to talk about human rights. Two schools combined efforts on a joint project in support of preventing substance abuse. Other projects had very local connections – reducing hate language in school, for instance – while some teams reached out internationally in support of refugees in Europe.

The BC HRC is charged, among other things, *to promote understanding of diverse cultures through education and community action* and *cultivating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and harmonious inter-group relationships.* The students whose work is reported here have certainly grasped the importance of these tasks. We hope you are as proud of them as we are. We appreciate the County's support of this ongoing Human Rights Academy.

Elenita Muñiz

Elenita Muñiz, Coordinator

Barnstable County Human Rights Commission:

Human Rights Academy Report 2016

Barnstable High School, *Pam Silva, Advisor*: The BHS Human Rights Club designed a mission statement that acknowledges their affiliation with the BC HRC and begins "In keeping with the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, our club promotes awareness and respect for people's human rights and freedoms. We plan and conduct activities and service projects…" For Human Rights Day on December 10, they made posters about the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration and put them up around the school.

They borrowed an idea from the work of Cape Cod Academy and Dennis-Yarmouth High School and decided to work on housing issues, particularly the work of Homeless not Hopeless, and toured Eve's House in Hyannis, a home for formerly homeless women. Their annual Gingerbread House event raised $500, which they donated to Homeless not Hopeless.

They also made lunches for the NOAH Shelter, and took them to the shelter to distribute and to meet the clients of the shelter. The lunch makings were donated, in part, by the food service provider at BHS.

They also took part in the Big Fix sponsored by Housing Assistance Corporation, gathering on a Saturday morning at Upper Cape Tech. They were assigned a house to go to and did yardwork and gardening for a veteran, as well as building a set of steps and painting the house. Together with other volunteers, they enjoyed a lunch at Upper Cape Tech. Later in the spring, they planned a bowling event with the residents of Angel House, a shelter for families fleeing abusive situations.

Cape Cod Academy, *Larry Brown, Advisor*: The People to People Club sponsors three coffee houses each year, featuring talented students from the school. They also sponsored the annual Shelter from the Storm concert. Over the nine years of this concert, the students have raised over $100,000 in support of programs for the homeless, for veterans, and for domestic abuse survivors.

This year, students from Barnstable High School, Sturgis Public Charter School, Pope John Paul II High School, Monomoy Regional High School, plus two dance troupes and a youth symphony orchestra – and of course, from Cape Cod Academy – appeared in the Shelter from the Storm concert. They raised $19,000. Safe Harbor runs a shelter for battered women in a former motel. They wanted to refurbish ten more units in the hotel, so the CCA students donated $15,000 to enable that work. The balance of their funds they split among the NOAH Shelter, the Council of Churches, and other groups. They hosted a dance "to help people."

CCA's Pink Ribbon Club works on the issue of breast cancer and through bake sales, car washes, and other events raised $4,000 this year. That money was donated to the Cuda Center to benefit women who can't afford mammograms or other breast health care.

Cape Cod Academy's eighth grade photography students worked on a special project. As one of the students reported, complaints against NOAH, Champ House, and the Homeless not Hopeless homes resulted in a movement to place the NOAH Shelter further away from downtown Hyannis. Mr. Brown invited five eighth-graders who were studying natural light photography to work on a Portrait Project to help put a personal face on the concept of "the homeless." Several homeless clients of NOAH Shelter agreed to be part of the project and met with the students to share their stories. The students took portraits of their partners and appeared on a radio program to share what they had learned about homeless people. "They are individuals, not just a name..." The portraits and essays have been displayed at the Cape Cod Council of Churches, Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC), CHAMP Homes, and Cape Cinema. The students were interviewed at a telethon to benefit HAC and on WQRC and presented their portraits and spoke at a church in Eastham.

CCA students reached out to all the schools present at the Human Rights Academy for information about their own schools' Talent Show dates, so they can bring even more students into next year's Shelter from the Storm concert. The concert is held the Friday before February vacation each year at Tilden Auditorium, Cape Cod Community College, and is open to the public. Larry Brown also honored one of his graduating seniors who, as a student at Dance Designs and a performer in the Shelter concerts as well as many other events, has helped raise over $300,000 for charities over the past six years.

Cape Cod Tech, *Patricia Policastro, Advisor:* Moved by the news and images of refugees seeking to enter Europe by taking the risk of crossing the Mediterranean in small open boats, the CCT HRA team raised money to purchase 100 blankets. These were sent to the refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos. In another activity, the group observed the Day of Silence, designed to spur consideration of how difficult it is to live as a member of the LGBT community if one is afraid to come out or is unsure of who might be allies in that process. About 160 students marked this day by not speaking throughout the school day.

Falmouth Academy, *Carol DiFalco, Advisor,* and Falmouth High School, *Bill Mock, Advisor:* For the first time ever, two schools decided to pool their talents and energy and work together on a human rights project! They shared a bus to the fall Human Rights Academy and, inspired by the agencies and activists they had met there, spent their ride back to Falmouth brainstorming ideas. They decided to work together to support Jack's PACT, a substance abuse prevention program of Gosnold on Cape Cod. They cohosted a coffee house featuring student talent and they decided to have a joint student and faculty art show. One hundred eleven pieces of art were hung in the galleries of Falmouth Academy and some 200 people attended. That event raised $900 in one night and a second event may be held in late spring.

The FHS students also continued a project their club had begun last year, with a refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon. They supported the Women and Children's Learning Center at the camp for Syrian and Palestinian refugees. They had donated books and started a portrait project for which they donated cameras and art supplies. Students exchanged photos with

women and children at the Learning Center and then created portraits based on the photos. They will host a late spring art show of the portraits.

Monomoy Regional High School, *Angelina Raneo Chilaka and Brenda Waystack, Advisors*: The Monomoy Human Rights Club includes members of the Gay Straight Alliance, Best Buddies, Peer Leaders, and members of STAND, the international student-led movement to end mass atrocities. The HR Club's work focused in three areas: working with the middle school HR Club, improving awareness of community in the school, and supporting the Family Food Pantry and CHAMP Homes.

This was the first year the eighth graders at MRHS started their own human rights club. The high school and middle school clubs met together and supported each other's work, especially the sock drive and chili contest *(see below)*. The high school club organized a Peace Week in the spring, with each day having a different theme. Monday was Human Rights Day, Tuesday was devoted to Gender Equality, Wednesday focused on Genocide, Thursday was Carl Wilkens* Day, and Friday was a Day of Silence (focus on the hidden lives of lgbt people) topped off by a Break the Silence Coffee House. They made tie-dye shirts for Peace Week to support Hope For Ariang (schools in South Sudan) and two Cape Cod charities (Harwich Family Pantry and CHAMP Homes.)

In other activities designed to strengthen the sense of community at the regional school, the students are making friendship bracelets at lunch and they erected Peace Poles in the cafeteria with paper doves on which students can write what peace means to them. They sponsor several Mix-it-up Mondays, when students are asked to sit at lunch with someone they don't know and learn about each other, then share what they learn.

The club sponsored a Chili Contest as well. Thirteen restaurants took part and the event raised $1,300. Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hebert, founders of CHAMP Homes, were honored guests at the chili contest. Half the proceeds were donated to CHAMP Homes and half to the Family Pantry in Harwich. (Best chili was that offered by Red's Pizza on Main Street in Harwich Center!) They held a sock drive and collected 150 pairs of new socks, which they donated to the homeless.

The STAND students traveled to Washington, DC to lobby against genocide, working with STAND. They talked to people from Syria, Sudan, and Rwanda and asked how they could help, how they could lobby to support an end to genocide. They also lobbied Representatives to bring in more than the 10,000 Syrian refugees currently being planned for, as over 1,000,000 Syrian refugees are seeking a safe place to live.

This ambitious group also traveled to Iowa to attend caucuses and talk to candidates about human rights.

The Monomoy and Nauset High School Human Rights Clubs are joining forces for a Holocaust Awareness Program at Nauset Middle School in May.

Not content to rest on their laurels over the summer, the HR Club is going to support one of their advisors, Ms. Waystack, by taking part in the Bob Murray Housing with Love Walk

in July. This seven-day trek goes from Provincetown to Falmouth, raising money to prevent homelessness.

** **Carl Wilkens** is the former head of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International in Rwanda. In 1994, he was the only American who chose to remain in the country after the genocide began. (Wikipedia)*

Monomoy Regional Middle School, *Pamela Reuss, Advisor:* This team of seventh grade students was inspired by the Fall Human Rights Academy to work with Youth StreetReach, a program sponsored by the Cape Cod Council of Churches. The students attended a Youth StreetReach sleepover, sorted donated clothing for men, women, and children, ate with the people who came in for breakfast and got to know them. "We had fun," they reported. When they distributed the clothing they had sorted, they heard repeated wishes for new underwear, so back at school they run a Snack Cart after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The profits from the snack cart will be used to purchase underwear for the homeless.

They sponsored a sock drive and donated 75 pairs of socks, plus toothbrushes and toothpaste, to the homeless. These supplies were donated to the Federated Church on Main Street in Hyannis, where they did their sleepover with Youth StreetReach.

This middle school group also tackled another challenge in their own school. At lunch, students were required to take milk, at no extra cost, but even if they had dairy allergies and took bottled water, they had to pay for the water. The Human Rights Club was able to change that policy and now water is a free alternative to the milk requirement.

Their club grew from seven members to 15 and these students are looking forward to moving on to the high school next year and working with the high school Human Rights Club.

Nauset Regional High School, *Lisa Brown, Advisor:* The large Nauset Human Rights Club is dedicated to spreading empathy, social justice, and empowerment. It is student-run, with co-presidents.

They have an on-going project with the elementary schools in their district: an anti-bullying curriculum designed for kindergarten through fifth grade, with age-appropriate activities to help kids learn how to define, recognize, and respond to bullying. Another annual project is taking part in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day silent march in Wellfleet. Following the march, they did a presentation on inequalities and race.

They created a Human Rights Gallery, with independent study projects designed to raise awareness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its individual articles. They place human rights articles and tiles around the school and sponsor a scavenger hunt to find them. In the Nauset Gallery, they post maps of human rights violations and posters about violations of the UDHR. They also created a huge collage of human faces.

Every year, a group of the Human Rights students goes with Ms. Brown to Haiti where they spend time with villagers and work on projects to help the community of Matenwa. This is

a project that has continued for fifteen years and has resulted in the establishment of an Art Center to empower women in the community, a dental clinic, a school nurse and more.*

This year, students attended a rally calling for the closing of Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant. They did research in advance on the issues surrounding the plant, produced a television show and helped to educate the community on the issues. They attended a rally at the State House, where some of them were speakers and they testified before the state legislature, receiving a standing ovation.

Another focus has been on sexual assault awareness. They educated peers about the meaning of "consent" and shared stories of sexual assault. They hosted a display of the Clothesline Project, where survivors of violence hang shirts on which they have told their story in art or words. They mounted a play called *Good Kids* about sexual assault and party awareness.

A related project focused more narrowly on "party safety." They created an ad campaign about rights, what it means to be a kid, how to stay safe, and what to do if someone at a party is non-responsive.

In another project, the students worked to raise awareness of human trafficking on Cape Cod. They put up stickers in bathroom stalls with information about emergency help line phone numbers. The help line is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by staff of Homeland Security who are trained to respond to calls for help. In this project, the students worked with Kristin Knowles of PATH (People Against the Trafficking of Humans).

The Nauset HRA team also continued their work program begun last year with the Get Empathy. They created a Community Action Network and arranged for teachers to be trained in Get Empathy techniques. They sponsored after-school activities designed to encourage more empathy among members of the community.

In June, fourteen student members of the Human Rights Club will be going to the Hague for the Global Human Rights Summit. For four days, they will be discussing human rights problems with students from around the world.

The Nauset Human Rights Club can be reached at nausethra@gmail.com and can also be followed on Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

**Ms. Brown is opening up to students from other HRA schools the opportunity to travel to Mantenwa with Nauset students next year. She can be contacted at brownl@nausetschools.org*

Provincetown Schools, *Monica Jalbert and Judith Stayton, Advisors:* The Human Rights Club of the Provincetown Schools does various projects, depending on the grade involved. They begin by studying the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Rev. Brenda Haywood visited the fifth grade to raise awareness of human rights and the students wrote poetry, in English and Spanish, about human rights.

Provincetown is an International Baccalaureate school system and eighth grade students work on individual projects designed to contribute to solving current issues. Safara Brooker's project was to incorporate a "human knot" into a school field day. She also organized and hosted a coffee house. Anna Schantz investigated Bangladesh clothing factories. She learned

that factories in Dhaka are known for worker abuse, the hiring of child workers, long work hours, unsafe and toxic conditions with no masks or other protection. She wrote to Walmart about not purchasing clothing made in these factories and raised money for a secure metal factory that would be fire-proof. She asked all at the HRA to think about child workers when buying clothing made in Bangladesh.

Christian Costa decided to work with Heifer International. He made a two-day trip to Heifer, where students role-played families in which only the houseowner could read, and they had to feed the family animals and clean the house. Provincetown's sixth grade is going this year to Heifer. They are raising money to "Send a Girl to School in Guatelama" and to buy a goat.

The Kiva Project is a charitable enterprise that encourages very small loans to low income entrepreneurs, who use the loan to support their business and then repay it to the lender. The eighth grade supported the Kiva Project this year.

The Provincetown Schools are small, students reported, but human rights is a big topic there. They were proud to come to the HRA and report on their work. They learn something new every year.

Ms. Jalbert said the fifth through eighth grades are using the Youth for Human Rights curriculum to study the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is fun and educational and attending the Human Rights Academy is very inspiring. They always come away with lots of ideas!

Riverview School, *Brewster Anderson, Advisor:* Riverview's GROW program is designed for post-high school students. The first -year class this year raised $1,500 which they used to purchase Toys for Tots and for the Salvation Army's Dress a Live Doll program at Christmas. They also purchased and delivered items for the Sandwich Food Pantry and weekly made sandwiches for the Food Pantry.

The second-year class donated $460 to CHAMP Homes in Hyannis and purchased bedding, towels and hygiene products for the Homes.

The third-year students donated $850 to the Salvation Army's Teens Love Christmas program, with gifts purchased at local stores.

Their plan for the remainder of the year included supporting the Best Buddies program, planting flowers for Flower Angels under the guidance of a master gardener, and completing the 5K Walk for Hunger.

Sturgis East Charter Public School, *Nadia Selim, Advisor:* As in some other schools, the Sturgis East Human Rights Academy team includes students from several clubs, including Amnesty International, the Gay-Straight Alliance, Key Club, Model UN, Feminist Club and Fundraisers.

The GSA meets weekly at lunch time, where they host discussions of issues such as the effect of media on teen life, gender identity, and other topics. They sometimes have guest speakers and show videos. They are offering a healthy relationships seminar after school and

have a coffee house planned for the late spring. In addition, they are doing a Tally Board project, where they will keep track, without any explanation, of all name-calling, racial slurs, and other hate speech. They are doing this for two weeks, after which they will use an advisor period to explain what the Tally Board means and lead discussions on how to deal with such hurtful language and the attitudes behind it.

Amnesty International works to promote social equality and justice. They hosted a speak-out about child soldiers and worked to raise awareness about the lives of undocumented immigrants. At Christmas, they did a sock drive for the homeless. They also write letters in support of campaigns to free human rights activists worldwide who have been imprisoned as a result of their work. In a related campaign, they have worked to free those being held in solitary confinement. They also will picket at the State House in Boston in support of bringing more Syrian refugees to the United States.