



Superintendent's NEWSLETTER



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Over 200 GUHSD 11th graders attended Camp Lead and became leaders at their schools in promoting human relations.

Promoting Positive Human Relationships in Our Schools and Our Communities

A recent article in *East County Magazine* broadly painted a negative picture of East County, its schools and the city of Santee regarding "Hate Crime" issues. It is disappointing that *East County Magazine* published an article filled with innuendo and incidents that were factually incorrect, containing unsupported allegations from unidentified sources. I believe that as your Superintendent, I have the obligation to set the record straight regarding these allegations for the students and parents of East San Diego County, as well as its business and civic communities.

First, there is no tolerance for hate crimes in our District. Whenever we encounter such a situation, we have and we will continue to prosecute these incidents to the fullest extent of the law. That has also been my experience with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, other law enforcement agencies and city government officials. In the one verifiable case cited in *East County Magazine*, contrary to claims in the article, the student involved was arrested and expelled from the District. **Second**, like all other public agencies, **we have a very strong discrimination complaint procedure** and have trained employees on the reporting of discrimination and "hate-based" incidents. Fully protected under Federal law, there is no reason for an individual who is telling the truth not to report a case of discrimination. **Third, in our high schools and in our District, we have taken explicit action to address human relations issues.** I would like to share some of those efforts with you:

1. We are preparing to implement an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) training, "**No Place for Hate**" districtwide during the 2010-11 school year. The 2009-10 school year will be used for preparation. In addition, the ADL provided GUHSD teachers and staff anti-discrimination and human relations training three years ago.
2. We implemented *Character Counts!* with the Josephson Institute for Ethics, a comprehensive student and adult **Character Education** program stressing universal values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, citizenship and fairness.
3. Our **Project Shield** program implemented **Camp Lead** and brought together over 200 11th grade students from different cultures and ethnicities, representing each of our school campuses. These students went through three days of training on addressing tolerance, human relations and other proactive measures to promote positive student interpersonal relations. These teen leaders are now working with other students on their campuses to help promote strong human relations. The students also meet regularly to continually improve their ability to foster positive campus environments.
4. We have initiated an **Israeli-GUHSD Youth Ambassador Exchange Program**. Ten Israeli Youth Ambassadors will be housed in homes throughout East County from October 28th – November 3rd. These students will be working with our students to foster strong, positive relationships and understanding of one another. We will be sending ten 11th grade East County high school students to Israel to learn about the country and its culture. They will spend the following year as Youth Ambassadors throughout East County promoting understanding of Israel and the Jewish community.
5. Under the leadership of Principal Pat Keeley, West Hills High School has been a leader in human relations programs for adults and students. Last Spring, he led a multicultural program that engaged all West Hills students in understanding the experiences of America's different ethnic groups. Last week, West Hills held a four-day **Unity Week** program. I attended the exceptional opening session. In the time period leading up to **Unity Week**, over 100 West Hills seniors were trained in human relations skills and strategies. During the week, West Hills students engaged in a variety of positive human relations activities. The seniors worked with smaller groups of students engaging in dialog on the same topics. Multicultural awareness will be an ongoing project of the school.

As I begin my third year as Superintendent, I am disheartened to see East County being painted with a negative, stereotypical brush. It is inherently unfair to schools, our business community and our elected officials who are working so hard to ensure positive and safe campuses and community environments for all students, staff and parents.

"Every student a graduate, and for each graduate a great future."