



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Schools
150 years of 'Believing, Achieving, Serving'

May, 2007

Hot Topics

A group of Hamilton students recently took part in the Asper Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program. The program was part of a larger Canada-wide program, which had four parts. The first component was education. Fifty-seven students represented Hamilton's two school boards, as well as the various ethnic and religious backgrounds of students here in Hamilton. These students came together on Sunday nights at Temple Anshe Sholom to learn about Human Rights and the Holocaust. Sessions ran from January to May.

The second component was a trip to Washington on May 6-9, which proved to be a moving experience for all students. The next component of the program was 18 hours of community service. And lastly was a graduation ceremony, at which students signed their Memorandum of Personal Responsibility. This fantastic evening, which took place on Sunday May 27th, allowed students to share their reflections with their parents, friends, and program supporters. This opportunity would not have been possible without the leadership of Madeleine Levy and Elaine Levine of the Hamilton Jewish Association, the support of both school boards in Hamilton, and SISO (Settlement and Immigration Services Organization).

Washington Reflection: The Trip that Changed My Life

By Denise Benjamin
Student, St. Jean de Brebeuf student

This trip to Washington was not a regular trip. It was a life-altering and memorable experience! It was a great opportunity to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and it is there that my heart was touched in a different manner. Throughout the educational sessions leading up to the trip, I learned more about Human Rights in general, and I brought a lot of the information I learned back to my family and friends. These sessions helped a lot because it prepared me for the trip that we all were about to take. I was looking forward to the trip, and it seems like it went quickly. I would love to go back to Washington D.C. It is such a beautiful city. The memorials and museums were stunning.

We visited a lot of exhibits and museums, but two exhibits in particular touched me the most - Daniel's Story and the shoes exhibit. I read the book Daniel's Story in grade 8, and I couldn't believe that the one book that sparked my interest in human rights, I was going to see an actual exhibit on this very boy Daniel. While I was walking through Daniel's house, I could not help but sympathize with those who suffered, as I got tears in my eyes. The other exhibit that touched me deeply was the shoes. I saw pictures of the shoes and I have heard the meaning behind them, but looking at the shoes, right beside my own two feet, looking at it with my own two eyes, I was overwhelmed. To think that innocent peoples' lives were taken, with no compassion, no regret - how could this have happened? To me, visiting the Holocaust Museum was the most memorable part of the trip.

The whole trip was absolutely amazing and it was time well spent. I still look back and think of everything that I did in Washington D.C., and it still shocks me that I even went there. This trip was an unforgettable experience!

The quote by Margaret Mead means a lot to me and it inspires me to stand up for Human Rights: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."