

Love Boat Lovelies

(Photo courtesy of Kathryn Wilson for *The Illinois Valley News*)

Rebecca Pearson (left) and Barbara Leon arrived at the dock to board the Love Boat Caribbean Cruise event Sat. February 22 at the Selma Community Center.

Bully ... Continued from A-1

"And to those who've been bullied or harmed, you don't have to lash back," she added. "If you've been physically, emotionally or sexually abused in life, your worth is not diminished. No one can do that to you."

Garbarz also wanted those who are high achievers, good-looking, have more money or better clothes to understand that "this does not mean you're better than anyone else."

"The message today is that there's options to feeling victimized," said Healthy U Director Nicole Resenbrink, who organized the event. "Tawana really embodies that message."

Rensenbrink, a therapist, has worked with Valley school kids for 18 years.

"I was looking for methods to help impact school culture in a positive way, to breed more respect between students, and came across this Day of Respect curriculum geared toward secondary schools."

Students from Erica Butler's Leadership Class at Illinois Valley High School took the stage and performed skits illustrating what happens when people fan the flames by reacting strongly to a bully, or arguing with a friend or sibling who is upset about something. Then they demonstrated how calm responses can diffuse potentially nasty situations.

"We can make confrontations better or worse. It's all about how we handle it," George said. "It's hard not to get defensive when we're attacked. We have feelings, but we can choose to react non-defensively. Then the encounter ends much better for everyone. It's a skill."

To lighten things up the kids were also treated to a dance performance by the Art Stars Performance Group, also made up of IVHS students and organized by local dance teacher Gina Angelique.

After the assembly, back in their classrooms, the kids broke into groups of two and role played different responses to testy social encounters: first reacting with strong emotion when feeling picked on; but then, acting out the same scenario calmly, they practiced using steady behavior to dial things down.

"It's good for the middle-school kids to learn how to deal with tense situations now," said IVHS Associated Student Body President Edilet Rodriquez, "because we all know that high school is drama-filled."

"It takes two to argue," added IVHS student Jacob Rubenstein who performed in the skits. "Whether it's with a friend or dealing with a bully, keeping it cool keeps the situation neutral."

Filing out of the cafeteria that afternoon, the children displayed ready smiles. It was a very good day at Lorna Byrne.

Dome School celebrates Dr. King's legacy

By
Judy Hoyle
IVN Contributing Writer

February is celebrated nationwide as Black History Month. Locally, the Dome School in Takilma has organized an annual concert celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day for the past nine years.

"The Dome School has an emphasis on teaching tolerance and an appreciation for diversity," said Dome School lead teacher Katherine Roncalio. "We want to send our students into the world to become part of the change for the betterment of all."

In keeping with that philosophy, part of the funds raised through the concert and related activities are sent to the Willamette Valley non-profit "Ancient Ways" to help school children in Zimbabwe. The organization directly serves over 2,800 people, including 1,700 children.

At the Dome School, Martin Luther King quotes drawn and colored by students cover the walls along with images of King and Gandhi. During a recent sunny afternoon, the children gathered briefly with their teachers and supporting parents to send a check for \$300 to help children in Zimbabwe.

"This was our best year yet for raising these funds," Roncalio said. "Many community members donated their time, energy and materials to make the event a success."

Another program emphasis for the Dome School is a focus on lifelong learning.

"We want them to have confidence and a desire to pursue knowledge and skills they'll need for the future," Roncalio said. "We're committed to continuing to learn and practice those skills. Our world is changing rapidly and as the use of robots increases, factory jobs are disappearing. We in 2014 don't even know what future citizens will need to know, but we can emphasize people skills that robots will never master including creativity and communication skills."

Dome School students are encouraged to

listen carefully and are often given opportunities to speak in front of the group.

"These are important qualities for all our children to learn and one of the reasons people send their kids here," Roncalio said. "Parents play a big role in our school. We expect them to model respect for education at home and we always ask them to share their special skills with us."

For example, the Takilma-Zimbabwe connection stretches back to 2001 when Dome School parent Thom LeGay and other community members got involved in marimba music-making. LeGay taught marimba to Dome School students and helped form the student performance group Marimba Rangers. LeGay went on to build marimbas and his marimbas have been used in the music program at Lorna Byrne Middle School.

The Zimbabwe donation is part of the Dome School teaching component known as the Generosity Project. The Happiness Project includes praising others for what they're doing right, rather than pointing out when they're doing wrong. The students give each other gold stars for good behavior.

"We like to practice random acts of kindness," Roncalio said. "We study Gandhi here. This is important stuff that humans need to learn. We emphasize this in our curriculum."

Roncalio is in her 25th year of teaching at Dome School, where her children, and now a grandchild have all attended. Helen Kaufman, another Dome School mother has now worked at the school for over 30 years, almost the entire time it has existed. Both demonstrate the deep community roots and philosophical continuity that has guided the organization.

The program has proven its worth many times over the years. One easily recognizable measure is the high ratio of Dome School graduates who have graduated high school and college compared to national norms. Another is the number of Dome School students who've become IVHS valedictorians and salutatorians.

(Photo by Judy Hoyle, *Illinois Valley News*)

Dome School lead teacher Katherine Roncalio laughs as Dome School students and part of their parent support team celebrate donating \$300 to school children in Zimbabwe.

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