

Nominees: Jonah Nicosia & Jennifer Correa

Manatee Middle School's guidance counselors, Jonah Nicosia & Jennifer Correa continued the Anti-Bullying campaign that began last year, but enhanced it to involve more student participation and include a guidance lesson in all classrooms.

This year an announcement was made for all students interested in participating in an anti-bullying committee to sign up. A total of twenty-one seventh and eighth grade students committed to the cause. During the first meeting the committee came up with various ideas to do throughout the year and signed up for smaller subcommittees: events, artwork, and presentations. They then met during lunches to plan out the first events and write scripts for classroom presentations.

Kicking off the campaign was Reflection Monday on October 10th, 2011. The morning announcements included a quote about tolerance that students were asked to reflect on in their first period classes and bookmarks from PACER Center were distributed to every student. Orange & Black Bully Free bracelet sales began as well in order to promote Unity Day on October 12, 2011. Students paid \$1 for the bracelet and were allowed to wear Orange shirts that day instead of their normal white polo uniform shirt in order to pull together as a school to promote tolerance and stand up against bullying.

The theme continued on October 31, 2011; Random Act of Kindness Day. The day began with students viewing the Liberty Mutual commercial promoting passing on kindness during their first period. Smarties with a random act of kindness written on it as well as colorful Pass It On cards were distributed after the clip. The students were asked to complete the act of kindness on their candy and those randomly chosen students that received the card were asked to do something nice for someone. Once they did that they were to give them the card so they can "Pass It On" to someone else. The goal was to have the card passed on at least three times during the day. This day was a huge success with staff and students alike fully engaged in the activities.

As for the student presenters, they worked closely with the guidance counselors to prepare skits that showed bullying in action and the different players in a bullying situation. All the classrooms were visited with the skits being the opening act of the presentation with discussion following. The counselors then shared a power point that the students took notes on and concluded with a powerful video on bullying that prompted more classroom discussion. Students and staff were provided with a Guide to Bullying Prevention with resources and information broken down into easy categories.

Collaboration with the community is also imperative to promote tolerance and diversity. Jonah and Jennifer have been successful in reaching out and working with a variety of agencies to support our school. One such example that is appropriate for this award is the partnership with the Shelter for Abused Women and Children. Jennifer worked closely with them to have the RAISING GENTLE'MEN program introduced to selected 8th grade boys. These boys met once a week for one hour during lunch for eight weeks exploring how to be a true gentleman. Discussions focused on stereotypes, societal expectations, female stereotypes, and the power of language and how it can degrade or uplift people. Midway through selected girls were asked to join the group so they could benefit from this group that promotes gender equality and works to end violence in our society.

Jonah & Jennifer are still not done. There will still be meetings with the committee to plan more events, an art contest promoting tolerance with the winning design will be painted in the courtyard by students on the committee and the winning artist is planned and the Holocaust Box Car and an 8th grade student created museum will be on display during the week of May 4-11, 2012 where a community educational event will be held.

Jonah & Jennifer have been working tirelessly this year to bring to fruition an enhanced school wide effort to promote kindness, tolerance, fairness and a sense of pride in all the students. The student committee is a group of committed seventh and eighth graders who are becoming leaders in the school due to the confidence instilled in them by these counselors. Manatee Middle School is honored and proud to have two wonderful, caring, hardworking counselors advocating on the behalf of all students and staff.