

College Park High

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Subject: Anti-Bullying

Practice: Challenge Day, 'Next Steps, Be the Change'

Challenge Day Club: College Park Students Tell their Success Story

College Park High School hosted a Challenge Day Event (www.challengeday.org) to reduce bullying and substance use on campus. By blending S3 events and support systems, they created life-changing enthusiasm among students and staff.

It started in the big gym, where over 80 students and 20 adult advisors spent an entire day learning how to communicate honestly and see people for who they really are. After the event, students were so inspired they proclaimed that they wanted to—had to—become agents of change. Nineteen students and six adults were sent to an intensive three-day workshop called Next Steps, Be the Change (www.challengeday.org/how-next-step-works.php). Student leaders, working with two adult advisors, formed a Challenge Day Club. Here's what three student leaders had to say about it:

What is the purpose of the Challenge Day Club?

Chelsea Thompson, club secretary: Now that we're actually doing it, the purpose has become clear. We give every student a place to come and feel safe, to be heard, to be real, to receive tools, and have fun. After all the meeting and planning, I know my job. I make newcomers feel welcome and give them information. I represent our purpose, which is to give every student a chance to: Make Friends, Be Real, Be Heard, Have Fun.

What are the most important things you learned from Challenge Day?

Mayra Rodriuguez, club president: You can't judge people based on what they look like at school. I used to judge people by their dress and superficial actions but after Challenge Day, I saw that others share a lot of my own experiences. I have no right to judge. Also, I used to hide my feelings. Now I have tools and can tell people how I feel. I learned to forgive and deal with my anger. I used to be very angry at my father; I could not express it and did not have the support I needed. I had friends but didn't know what they were going through. In Challenge Day, I learned to connect to friends at a deeper level so we can offer each other support. Now I feel free to talk about personal issues. I don't just show people my surface.

How are you bringing the club to students?

Christina Thompson, club programming: We try to make each experience something students want more of. We play games like 'Make up a Dance' and 'Scotch Tape Hugging,' and challenge each other to do more serious things like: ask three people in your life a question and take the time to really listen. Also: feed people! We open the small gym once a week and provide food, music, and fun. Everyone has a place to go and people to hang out with at lunchtime. Last week 80 students came. Student advisor Paul Scholtz called it "the best mess we ever made." We learn by trying, and get better each time.