

Media Release

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For Immediate Release
Media Note*

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Students Address Diversity, Respect

Mankato-"Diversity...It's respect - period." That will be the message heard loud and clear by Mankato area middle school students beginning March 8th.

The program is the first in a series of Prejudice Reduction Workshops being launched by the Greater Mankato Diversity Council in conjunction with area schools. The Council's goal is to expand these ongoing annual workshops to all Mankato area students, K-12, within five years.

This year's workshops are being offered to all 7th and 8th grade students in Mankato's public and private schools. The curriculum is modeled on a successful K-12 diversity education program developed for the Rochester school system. Prior to being given the go-ahead in Mankato area schools, the program was studied and reviewed by local education and curriculum leaders.

The topic for students in grade 7 is "Global Awareness/World-Mindedness: If the World Were a Village," and addresses resource distribution inequities among the world's people. For grade 8, the topic, "Vive La Difference," will help students to understand how bias behaviors can lead to feelings of hate and discrimination.

Experienced facilitators from the Rochester Diversity Council are conducting the March workshops. A team of Mankato area facilitators has been selected to observe and then lead the program in years to come.

A volunteer board and two part-time staff are implementing the Greater Mankato Diversity Council's program of work. The non-profit organization has been in existence just under a year. The group's first Board of Directors was formed in September and an office was established in November.

While parents, teachers and students are probably most interested in the Prejudice Reduction Workshop curriculum, the Diversity Council's impact will be felt community wide.

"This curriculum has objectives and standards that address diversity issues," says Superintendent Ed Waltman, "but it emphasizes respect as its core value. Creating positive attitudes and behaviors in our children – tomorrow's leaders – is of critical importance."

"Change is inevitable, and differences create challenges. The issue is whether we use the challenges to invigorate or divide our community," says Diversity Council President, Dr. Katherine DuVal, SSND. "This underscores the Council's commitment to build a community where the attitudes and actions of people foster mutual respect so that all can fully participate."

Information about the workshops or the Greater Mankato Diversity Council is available by calling the Council's offices (co-located with the Greater Mankato Chamber of Commerce) at 507-345-4519. Information will also be available at www.mankatodiversity.com beginning March 8th.

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*Media note: Photo and interview opportunities will be available Tuesday, March 8th. Contact the Greater Mankato Diversity Council for more information.