

Madison West High School Class of '61 Educational Foundation

The approaching 50th anniversary of the Class of 1961 is a perfect opportunity to review the contributions to Madison West High School on behalf of our class.

Following the 40th Reunion, held just prior to September 11, a group of alumni started a discussion of what we, as a class, could give back to West as recognition of the benefits we gained as students and as a memorial to our classmates.

A Foundation was created and an outline of our objectives drawn up.

The thought at the time was to fund programs not available to students through the school, yet important to their personal development. Through alumni suggestions, the focus became providing training in leadership, diversity and communication skills which would contribute to building positive foundations for students in their community.



Everytown delegates July 2006 -07

Everytown Wisconsin was identified as our initial project. This was a branch of Anytown USA which conducted summer camps centered on diversity training and building communities of respect and understanding.



Robin with Emily Miller,
our first great contact with West High.

Working with a West High coordinator, four students were chosen to attend the Camp. Since that time, we sponsored 15 more students until the Camp closed in 2006. The positive feedback from the students was overwhelming. They learned how to recognize and challenge racism, sexism and ageism while developing communication skills based on respect and understanding, lifetime skills not taught in school.



Everytown delegates prepare a delicious dinner for a dozen of our classmates featuring specialties from their various ethnic backgrounds. Donna McDowell Beestman hosted several of these special occasions allowing us to get acquainted with the Everytown delegates.

West High's Principal, Ed Holmes, stated that what we were supporting was indeed becoming a more important part of the school's plan to build a positive environment between students themselves and with teachers. West is now looking at school-based and off-site training programs.



Principal Ed Holmes with the Peace Pledge—initiated by our Everytown group.



Our classmates Ralph Farmer, John & Judy Troia Wettenge and Robin Allin joined in for part of the 2009 HOUSE Retreat.

In 2009, West High introduced the first off-site, day long "Retreat." Over 120 students and teachers were involved in learning communication skills at many levels. The Class of '61 was the main sponsor, donating \$2500 in support. The results and feedback were incredible.



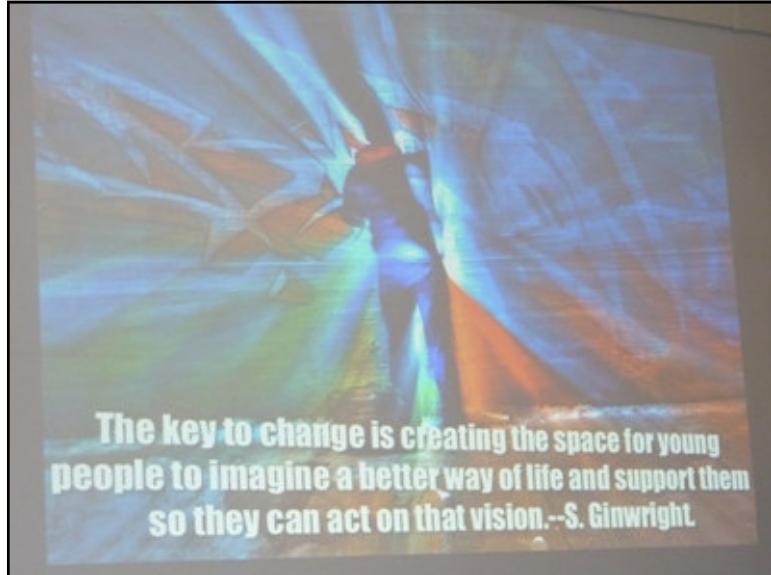
Group photo from the 2009 HOUSE Retreat



2010 Retreat facilitator
Roberto Rodriguez

His objective was to teach students how to use their voices for power as well as artistic means (art/song/dance/writing) to create positive environments. The Class of '61 again was the main sponsor and contributed \$5000.

Following the 2009 Retreat was 2010's "Student Voice Retreat." Again, over 100 students were selected from the 9th-12th grades with 20 staff members. The facilitator was Roberto Rodriguez, a Madison Memorial graduate who runs The Good Life Organization based in Chicago.



Original poetry reading from one of the group activities.
Schooling vs Education.



Students gather to discuss their projects.

Total contributions to date have been \$28,500 with project funding of \$16,810. Ninety (90) Class alumni as well as the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs have participated with donations with several alumni giving of their time to meet with West High staff and students. The funds are now administered by the Foundation for Madison Public Schools. The interest earned by these funds goes to the FMPS.

Together, the Class of '61 continues to make a difference.

If you are interested please contact Robin Allin
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Funds can be sent directly to:
Foundation for Madison's Public Schools
455 Science Drive Suite 130
Madison, WI 53711
Attn: Class of '61 Educational Fund