

Madison West Class of '61 Education Foundation



22 November 2016

Greetings to all and Wishing everyone a Happy Holiday!

We wanted to bring everyone up to date on the Class of '61 Education Fund and the 2016 Madison West Respect Retreat. A luncheon meeting was held last week to discuss this year's program, be introduced to our new Faculty "point person" Jeremy Thornton and review the future of the Respect Retreat.



Joining together at the Great Dane Restaurant to meet and discuss the Retreat were classmates Ralph Farmer, Donna McDowell Beestman, Peggy Ahlgren and Jeff Bartell.

Faculty members attending were the Dean of Students, Ellen Pryor and new Positive Behavior Coach, Jeremy Thornton.

As many of you already know, the Class of '61 Education Fund, has been the major driving force and financial resource for the Freshman Retreats for several years. This year is no different.

Since 2010, the program has been run by Minneapolis-based Youth Frontiers.



Believe it or not, The "Fund" is now 15 years old....started following the 40th Reunion in 2001! Since that beginning, you have contributed over \$50,000 which has been used to fund various programs all focused on helping students learn to deal with intolerance, racism, sexism, bullying and the many other social issues faced by today's young people. None of these programs would have been made available to the students without YOUR help!

As a class, in our 6th year of the Respect Retreat, this year we are contributing \$10,000 toward the program with several classmates donating an additional \$3,000 toward the 700-750 box lunches that they will need for the 600 Freshmen and 120 senior mentors, faculty and group leaders.

Our meeting included a discussion by Jeff about the future of the Respect Retreat without the support of the Class of '61. Ellyn Pryor made it clear West High feels the project has been very worthwhile yet without the Class of '61 the likelihood of continuing would be impossible. They have looked for outside funding and will continue to do so, however, given the current environment of shrinking public funds, the schools' budgets are very restricted for extracurricular programs.

Ellen related to us the incredible feedback from students, teachers and parents about the benefits of the programs and the impact it has had on many lives.



If you joined us at our 55th Reunion in August, you heard the **West High Principal, Beth Thompson**, speak on Saturday night.

She gave a very emotional speech...as Peggy says, a "WOW" speech! Beth wanted the alums to know how special we are, how much our contributions were appreciated and what a difference we had made with our generosity at West. Most were very touched by the fact that the CLASS of '61 is by far the most active alumni group in helping the students of West High.

As we have said before.....YOU are MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

In our meeting with Jeremy, we learned he is a mere 31 AND an East High graduate, a football player who always wanted to beat West (some things never change!)...Now he is one of us in his first year and will be in charge of the Retreat. He is already involved with preparing the senior volunteers (had so many, he had to make difficult choices) and talking with Youth Frontiers.

Traditionally the Retreat is held for 4 days in the second week of December. Each day, about 150 9th graders participate (600 total). This year the program will be December 6th-9th. (Tuesday—Friday)



Seniors—early morning orientation.

The day starts at 8:30 am with senior orientation with the freshmen arriving at 9:15. The sessions end each day at 3pm.



Small group discussions lead by seniors.

At the end of the day, a very emotional time takes place as students gather in a circle for the "campfire" with an open mike, where they can stand in front of their peers and talk about how they will change their habits, stop others from bullying or treat others with more respect.

A follow up on the Respect Retreat is done each week in the history classes (no more home rooms) with topics on behavior and attitudes provided by Youth Frontiers.

You are cordially invited to attend any or all sessions and during any time period...even lunch. Chairs are provided on the side for us. Enter on the Ash Street side and ask directions at the office (as well as sign in) and you will be directed to the small gym

Acoustics aren't great...so a little noisy on occasion (but when are kids quiet??)....with a little burping contest and infrequent screams!

Here are some of the sights you will see at the Retreat...senior leading discussion circle groups; seniors at orientation, singing and group projects (the famous chair exercise where you learn to trust the student behind you!)



Group discussions lead by seniors.



Senior facilitators

Freshman
Respect
Retreat
2015



Songs, stories, various activities to help Freshmen understand how their behavior affects others.



The "Chair" exercise. An act of trust & balance.



And a big thanks to one of West High's 1961 high school Potlucks
(can't believe they use that word!!)
In a challenge of matching funds they contributed over \$3200 in 2016!!
(Bet you can still recognize some of them.)

To contribute.....send checks to:
Foundation for Madison Public Schools
101 Nob Hill Road, Suite 300
Madison, WI 53713
Please note on check - "Madison West Class of '61 Education Fund"

Thanks for all you have done!!

Robin, Peggy and Jeff

Rnallinjr@gmail.com

Pahlgren@merr.com

Jbbartell@aol.com

P.S. After the December 2016 Freshman Respect Retreat we plan on sending up a follow up via email. If you are interested and not sure if we have your email address please send your current address to Peggy—pahlgren@merr.com. We will make sure that Jack Novick our email personage will get the info to you.

It should be an interesting Retreat. Ellen tells us that some of this year's 9th graders are already proving a challenge.

At this moment I think our goals will be to try and help West bridge the financial gap in funding this Retreat until they find other funding sources.

~~~~~