

...now I stand up for those
who are bullied, abused or
taken advantage of. I look at
these past experiences as a
lesson to be learned...I've learned
that everyone is created...

-Vanessa Guerrero-Cruz,
Christa McAuliffe Middle School

Violence is the cause
Of not only
Sleepless nights,
But emotional
Battles, raging
Inside my very being,
Ripping at my heart,
Trying to unnerve me.
-Jessica Stone, Palm Springs Middle School

DO THE WRITE THING

...the number one source of youth violence is
human emotions. They can affect you more
than you know it. For instance, you get in a
fight with a friend. You feel like the
simplest actions could make you go crazy.
That, is where violence begins.

-Maxx Melanson, Boca Raton Middle School

VIOLENCE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO STOP

DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE

2010 PALM BEACH COUNTY DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE

The Do the Write Thing Challenge provides middle school students with an opportunity to examine the impact of violence on their lives and communicate in writing what they can personally do to stop violence.



The program involves a classroom discussion and a "Challenge" to answer three questions in written form:

**How has youth violence affected my life?
What are the causes of youth violence?
What can I do to reduce youth violence?**

The goal of the program is to reduce violence in homes, schools and neighborhoods by encouraging students to make a personal commitment to do something about this problem. Complete information about the program is available online at www.dtw.org

There are 38,901 students enrolled in 35 Palm Beach County public middle schools. Of that number, approximately 13,772 students submitted writings. Many more participated in classroom discussions. Those schools with at least 1/3 of their students participating in the program were eligible to advance their "Top 10" best writings to the next level of judging. In addition, those "Top 10" students were published in this book. Since its inception, it is estimated that over a million students have participated in the Challenge. Over 300,000 of these students have accepted the "Challenge" by making a written personal commitment not to engage in violence and by preparing writings on the causes of and solutions for youth violence.

All of the entries in this book were read by multiple panels of volunteer judges who continued to narrow the field until the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place young men and young women finalists were chosen. The judges represent a cross section of Palm Beach County educators, parents, law enforcement and judicial leaders who are committed to solving the problem of violence in our community. We

are grateful to all of the judges who contributed their wisdom and a considerable amount of time to read and select the best entries.

The 1st place young man and young woman are invited as the guests of the local committee to serve as ambassadors from Palm Beach County in the national recognition ceremony along with other Do the Write Thing ambassadors from across the country.

The Do the Write Thing Challenge was established by the National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV) and is administered by the national office and by the local committee in each participating region. The NCSV seeks out individuals and businesses that want to make a difference in the lives of young people. If you would like to help the NCSV with your time or resources,



Bill Bone, Esq.

please contact the National Campaign to Stop Violence at 910 17th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006. Telephone: 202-2934483 or 800-256-0235. You can contact the local committee through its chairman, Bill Bone, Esquire, at 550 South Quadrille Boulevard, Suite 200, West Palm Beach, FL 33401. Telephone: 561-832-0623.

The following localities are currently active in the Do the Write Thing Challenge: Atlanta, GA; Austin, TX; Beaumont, TX; Boston, MA; Brownsville, TX; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Corpus Christi, TX; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Detroit, MI; El Paso, TX; Harrisburg, PA; Houston/Harris County, TX; Las Vegas, NV; Los Angeles, CA; Memphis/Shelby County, TN; Miami, FL; Newark, NJ; New York, NY; Odessa, TX; Palm Beach County, FL; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; San Antonio, TX; Victoria, TX; Washington, DC and the States of Mississippi and Utah.

DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE

2010 PALM BEACH COUNTY DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE

Cohen Pavilion, Kravis Center for the Performing Arts

May 10, 2010

PROGRAM

BILL BONE, ESQ.

Larmoyeux & Bone, PL

Palm Beach County Chairman, National Campaign to Stop Violence

DR. ARTHUR C. JOHNSON

Superintendent, Palm Beach County Schools

CAPTAIN JEFF LINDSKOOG

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

HONORABLE RONALD ALVAREZ

Judge of the Palm Beach County Circuit Court, Juvenile Division

PEPE FANJUL, JR.

Senior Vice President, Florida Crystals Corporation

Palm Beach County Sponsor

CONGRESSMAN TED DEUTCH

19th Congressional District of Florida

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT SPEAKERS:

Zachary P
Elyssa E

The entire ceremony will be filmed for broadcast on The Education Network (T.E.N.) on Comcast Channel 97 at the end of the month. T.E.N. is the television station for the School District of Palm Beach County. For broadcast times, contact the station at (561) 738-2926.

DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE

Participating Middle Schools and Top 10 Students

Omni Middle School
Pierre D'Aoust, Principal

Alyssa A
Ceiran C
Amanda D
Benjamin D
Elyssa E
Victor E
Tiffany E
Sophia G
Chehak G
Katelynn J
Le-Ceisa K
Jonathan K

Carli L
Zachary M
Angelina O
Zachary P
Savannah S
Olivia S
Rachel T

2010 DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE WINNERS

Selected from Participating Middle Schools in Palm Beach County



help
STOP THE VIOLENCE!

The Ambassadors from Palm Beach County

The first place young man and young woman are given the opportunity to travel to Washington, DC as Ambassadors representing Palm Beach County in the national recognition week ceremonies held July 10th through the 14th this summer. Students are accompanied by a parent and a teacher from their school. The local committee pays all the major expenses of the Palm Beach County delegation such as air travel and hotel accommodations.

The National Campaign to Stop Violence is especially grateful to Florida Crystals Corporation, the William H. Pitt Foundation, Southwest Airlines, and the Kuwait America Foundation for helping to underwrite these expenses.

The Published Writings of the "Top 10" Best Submissions

The 1st, 2nd and 3rd place young men and young women appear at the front of this book. Thereafter, all student writings are listed in alphabetical order by school.

In an effort to honor stylistic decisions and in recognition of the fact that this challenge is more about finding solutions for the problem of youth violence, then it is about the "skill" of writing, the 190 "Top 10" submissions published in this book have not been edited for grammar, spelling and structure. Students were judged on the content of their work and their response to these three questions:

- How has violence affected my life?
- What are the causes of youth violence?
- What can I do about youth violence?

VIOLENCE
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO STOP

Congratulations to Every Student who Participated in this Program!

Alyssa A 8th Grade

YOUTH VIOLENCE

In 2002, more than 877,700 people ages 10 to 24 were injured from violent acts and approximately 1 in 13 required hospitalizations (CDC 2004). In 2001, 5,486 young people ages 10 to 24 were murdered, an average of 15 each day, and 79% of homicide victims ages 10 to 24 were killed with firearms. Among students nationwide, 33% reported being in a physical fight one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey and in a nationwide survey, 17% of students reported carrying a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, or club) on one or more days to school. [Source: Family First Aid] Everyday, kids are killed and severely hurt due to youth violence. People are ignorant to the idea that youth violence affects the lives of many people and even ruins the lives of several people. Youth violence affects my life, has many causes and there are many ways it can be prevented.

It may not seem that obvious, but almost all kids are affected by youth violence. I am affected by it because I know someone very close to me who was once involved in youth violence. There was a gang in my neighborhood who was involved with drug deals and violent behavior. My neighbor and my best friend, was confronted by this gang, and he was forced to join or die. He had confided in me not to tell anyone but I knew that I need to help him at the same time. I was constantly paranoid and scared that he would get hurt but I didn't have the nerve to tell anyone about it. It greatly affected my focus and concentration at home, in school and it affected my relationships with my friends and family. I could even see a drop in my grades. Later that year, after I had no spoken up about this situation, he failed to fulfill the satisfaction of this sick gang and they beat him almost to death behind a grocery store not too far from our school. The fight had resulted in a shot being fired, hitting my friend in the back which paralyzed him from the thigh down. He is now restrained to a wheelchair for the rest of his life and will never know what its like to walk again. After he had gotten out of the hospital almost a year later, he told me that there were people who walked right by him while he was being beat up by the gang. He even said he heard the gasps of people after the shot had been fired, though no one had dialed 911. Though it may have not seemed like a big deal, many people are unaware of the significance of youth violence.

Others are ignorant and refuse to do anything about it. It has affected my life and many of my peers and it will continue to affect teenagers and kids unless we find a way to prevent it and find a solution to stop it.

There are various causes of teen violence. If teens see in the movies, in video games, magazines, books or on the street, they are more inclined to copy such behaviors. Another reason would be teenagers who have experienced bullying or teasing feel as if they need to gain revenge on those who have picked them and many other innocent people. Also, a big contributor of youth violence is if teens are exposed to it in their homes. Children look up to their parents and older siblings and are greatly influenced by their actions. Teens who also think violent thoughts on a regular basis can lead to the actual act of violence. Related to playing out something they saw in a movie, TV show, etc. is actually planning out acts of violence. Actually making a plan causes the teen to take a violent step.

People are not very conscious about teen violence, but even more people are less aware of how to prevent teen violence. There are many ways to prevent teen violence. If you know about someone who is involved with teen violence, a way to stop anything bad from happening you should tell an adult. Preventing violence at home and the exposure to explicit material will help put an end to teen violence. It is also vital that people are aware of teen violence so that people will try harder to stop it from beginning and more people will put an effort to end it.

By writing this essay, I hope that it does raise awareness to youth violence. It's a big problem in today's youth, but a problem we should all come together to solve. Youth violence plays a major role in the life of some teens and even some children. The impact of youth violence is life scarring and we want to prevent that from happening anymore. We want teens to become more comfortable in school, home, and in the community without disruption, rage and physical fights. We must encourage the improvements of the prevention of youth violence so that teens will not have their lives ruined by teen violence, and so that we can save the lives of many teens and children who are threatened by youth violence.

Elyssa E 8th Grade

Why me?
The apparition asks,
As he stares down at his own grave.
A mere tombstone,
That is very inscribed.
Stating the twelve years he lived,
Twelve years ended by youth violence.
It didn't take much,
To push him over the edge.
It didn't take much,
For him to take his own life.
And all to remember his life?
A stone.
Just simply looking at it,
And no one will ever know,
The pain suffered,
The struggle fought,
Or the fight endured.
After on glance at the tombstone,
His mind is flooded with feelings.
Feeling of regret, pain and sorrow,
That seem to overcome him.
He looks over to see his mother,
Tears in her eyes,
In obvious pain.
She weeps,
At the foot of her son's grave.
Thoughts too, race through her mind,
As she wonders who and why,
Would take her son from her.

The ghost looks over to his father,
Guard let down,
And once the tough exterior deteriorated.
Tears and pain seem to emit from him,
Because his boy is forever gone.
The boy tries to call to his parents,
Screaming and shouting.
He tries to comfort them,
But they don't see him.
They will never again,
See their son.
Regrets seem to overcome the young boy,
As he realizes what could have been done,
To save his life.
He could have told a trusted parent, teacher or coach,
Or gone to a guidance counselor.
But he never told anyone,
For he feared he would be looked upon as an outcast.
He could have started clubs or groups,
To fight the war against bullying and youth violence.
But he didn't.
And because of this, he lost his life.
And so there is no happily ever after.
To his story.
Simply because he did not take a stand,
Or try to get help for himself.
Indifference, in any form,
Kills.

Victor E
7th Grade

TEARS

Youth violence has affected my life
In many, many ways
I'll walk across the halls at school
And regret what I have witnessed
As a child hurts another child
Or many against one
Tears of fear and sadness
Sometimes even anger
Slip down a child's face
Whether he is beating, or being beaten.
They'll beat each other
For many reasons, it's true
Whether it's jealousy.
Or terrible, terrible parents
The causes of youth violence
Are saddening indeed
The things I can do
The things we should all do
Should be done immediately
We can relieve the good children
From the grasp of the beaters
To halt that tear in its tracks
And prevent any more tears from falling
Ever
Ever
Again.

Tiffany E
7th Grade

Do the Write Thing

I walked home from school shaking in fear,
Only because I knew my next beating was near.

I slowly opened the door to my home,
Then heard screams around the corner thinking, "I am not alone."

The next day at school, looking around was hard,
Seeing best friends standing together in the school yard.

I then walked up to a boy, who looked so innocent,
"I found another kid I would love to torment!"

I then pushed him into the locker, next a punch and then a kick,
Bullying is not the right choice I thought, than ran away quick.

It had affected my life in so many ways,
Thinking about it, put me in a daze.

The situation made me scared and full of freight,
The violence I experience would not let me sleep at night.

Bullying other people seemed to be the solution for me,
It changed when I realized I had no friends you see.

What caused this situation? May you ask?
To my parents it sure was an easy task.

They would punch me and beat me until I bleed,
I would then get on my knees and plead.

I would then go to school on a yellow bus,
Take my anger out on other people and make it seem like no fuss.

What did the students do? Just stand there and stare,
They didn't do anything, not even care.

They should have stood up and let their voices be heard,
Letting the violence continue, was so very absurd.

Do not join the gang and do what is wrong,
Help out each other and you will be strong.

If someone is bullied try to be their friend,
By pushing this friendship, violence will end.

Do the right thing and make sure your choices are smart,
Stand up for others and do your part!

Chehak G 7th Grade

ABUSE

It won't stop,
It echoes inside of me.
Her screams ricochet off my bones.
She knows I heard,
But silence is the only thing spoken.

I see her in the halls.
As she walks she pulls up her sleeve.
The blacks, blues and purples have smeared themselves upon her arm.
It see it and nod, because I know.

Walking home, the detective inside me emerges.

"What is the problem?"

"Are you okay?"

My questions go unanswered,
But words are spoken.

"This is my secret and the end"

She leaves and I am perplexed.
Her simple sentence astounds me.

"The end" she had said.

The end of what?

Abuse? Her drunken father? Life?

I make up my mind.

I must tell.

I don't care if it is your secret,

But it is your life.

And when you're gone,

It will be too late.

Le-Ceisa K 6th Grade

How Has Violence Affected My Life?

Personally, I believe that I am fortunate because violence has not affected my life. The main reasons why violence does not affect my life is because I try to do the correct thing most of the time and avoid getting into fights with my peers. However, there was an incident that took place in the cafeteria with my classmates and me. One day while I was having lunch, I caught one of my 3rd grade classmates stealing my chicken fingers from my plate because he did not have any lunch to eat that day. I felt sorry for him and decided to share my lunch with him.

Some of the things that cause youth violence are: gangs, poverty, peer pressure, bullying and bad neighborhoods. Violence comes from all nations, race, and neighborhoods of our country. There are also many factors that cause youth violence. I believe gangs plays a major part in youth violence because sometimes someone gets into trouble with a gang member and this leads to war, fights, ad even sometimes death. Many youth join gangs to become dons or leaders, to do bad things, and make others be afraid of them. I also believe that poverty help cause youth violence because when youths are poor and do not have their parents or money to buy their basic needs, like food and clothes, they will steal and hurt others just to get food when they are starving. Poor youths will also hurt anyone to get a pair of shoes or some warm clothes to wear in the cold weather.

I believe that peer pressure plays a major part in youth violence, especially in a school environment. Some youths will do anything it takes to fit in with their friends and feel big. I personally remembered an incident that took place at school and I was asked to hold a "stink bomb" and I did not refuse because I wanted to fit in so badly with the others that I could not say no to them. Sometimes youths are peer pressured to do silly things that sometimes leads them into serious trouble or jail. For example,

youths are sometimes peer pressured to do drugs and this sometimes leads to big additions and stealing. Bullying is major youth violence, especially at schools. Children are often bullied by others who take them for granted. Bullying does not only affect one physically but also mentally and makes youths who are bullied afraid to go to school. Bad neighborhoods also contribute to youth violence because when kids are used to only bad things, then they become accustomed to them and they follow and do bad things.

The things that I can do about youth violence are when I see anyone getting into a fight; I will try to get an adult to break it up. Another way to help prevent youth violence is to get my friends and me to do volunteering to help prevent violence in school, the bus and the streets. I would also make sure that I do not lie or take sides when there is something going on like a fight, arguments, harassment, bullying or anything physical. I will make a report of what I saw and just get a teacher to stop whatever is going on. If I was asked to bully someone for money I would not do it because I would not want someone to do that to me and push me around and call me names and so on just for a couple of dollars. Also if I am in a public place I would not be rude to the people next to me.

In conclusion, youth violence is everywhere in our country. Youths are more likely to react towards gangs, poverty, peer pressure, bullying, and others with violence because sometimes youths do not have anyone to talk to about how they feel. However, we need to be aware of what causes youth violence so that we are able to avoid violence, and report any form of violence when we see them. Youth violence can also make youths become criminals further on in life.

Jonathan K| 8th Grade

Violence has not every really taken a hold of my life but some people I once called friends were not as fortunate as I. He was fourteen years old and in 7th grade. He was held back one grade, and in the middle of 2009 turned violent and that still has not ended today. Where does violence emanate from? Does it come from the home, the school, peers, family, or from other places or people? I do not really know what the major factor was that made my friend turn violent. He does not go to Omni anymore so I will probably never know what it was that made him so angry to resort to some of the things he did and if I could have helped more, for the sake of his future which is already a dim light somebody needs to.

When I see or hear of violence it is usually on the news or in the newspaper, rarely does my quiet suburb of Boca Raton every get any of the action, any of the violent crimes. I have never really been a victim, witness or involved in violence, especially not youth violence. My non violent past ended, when a good friend of mine turned violent towards the world and everyone in it. He would take out his new found anger on other people by punching, kicking or any form of hitting. I don't know why he did it, but I assume that it made him feel better. I believe in an non violent future for the world but when violence worked its way into his life, I no longer thought that it was possible; violence made him a slave to it, referrals, suspensions, and eventually and expulsion. It was like a drug to him once he tasted it, he could never go back. Even as a friend, I was not immune to getting hit, there were a few days here and then my arm hurt a little bit, it was so minor to me, but for him it was the biggest problem in the world.

Violence is a tree, it has to start somewhere, and it has to have a seed to make it grow. While I am not entirely sure what his seed was, but I believe there were family issues. The abused became the abuser. Many lives were destroyed and affected by this tree, a life destroyed is the life of the boy, my friend. The lives affected were the ones he tormented and others like me.

I hate to use all the tree metaphors, but the tree of violence is like a weed, it multiplies and grows and the only way to destroy it is to get it out at the root. What is the answer to youth violence? Does it lie within education or in something more personal for kids? I believe the answer to end youth violence lies in the youth, a friend. A friend or friends can tell me and probably even make me stop doing something if it is for the better of me. Friends are people who you listen to, to get out the root you really have to separate the acts of violence from the person; you have to watch out for people who can not watch out for themselves. Where does the answer lie for youth violence? A kid's chosen group of acquaintances, a group of friends, not adults, maybe I am wrong but the answer for this problem lies in the youth.

The tree of youth violence affects many but takes everlasting affect on one. The petty acts of violence my friend committed stuck with me most, knowing that I could have tried harder, that I did not but could have changed his life for the better.

Carli L 7th Grade

Has youth violence affected your life in some way while you were growing up? Youth violence can affect people in many different ways, no matter how old or young you are. Everywhere I walk there is violence of some kind. Violence occurs when kids watch inappropriate shows or movies, when kids play bad games, as well as other kids giving or showing peer pressure. Some adults can also be a bad influence on their kids. There are many reasons that kids should not participate in youth violence, and I think it should stop. People wonder how youth violence has affected their life, what causes kids to participate in youth violence as well as what things they can do to prevent youth violence.

First, people wonder how youth violence has affected my life. Well youth violence has affected my life when other kids try to hurt me or my friends. It hasn't happened often, thank goodness but it has happened. Perhaps they try to bully me or my friends in one way or another. Also I have a few friends who have bad situations in their home environment and their parents may yell at them, hit them or make them feel bad for no apparent reason at all. This makes me horribly sad and also very mad because my friends are stuck with no one to turn to. Your parents and your home should always be a soft place to fall, not an angry violent place.

Next we all would like to know what are some of the causes of youth violence? As I mentioned earlier, participating in inappropriate games is one thing that causes some of the violence. When kids participate in these types of games, they think it is cool to actually re-enact them in real life with real people. Another thing that causes youth violence is watching bad or inappropriate television shows or movies. There are often young actors that play in these movies and these kids relate to them and try to do the same horrible things that these actors do in the movie or television show. The problem here is that they are in a movie which if fiction and these kids are copying things they do in real life, therefore hurting people in real life. There is also a lot of peer pressure for kids to participate in or act out different acts of violence. Some kids think it is cool or the "in" thing to be like other mean or hurtful kids, which of course only creates more youth violence.

Finally, we have to ask ourselves what exactly can we do as individuals or a community to help put an end to youth violence? Well the first thing that makes sense to me is to not allow kids to watch or see these inappropriate television shows or movies, even if it means removing a television from the house. This is a case where we may have to take extreme measures to prevent these kids from hurting others. I think the President of the United States should also put a ban on violent video games that some kids are playing. This of course would hopefully eliminate or limit the harm done to other children who have not done anything wrong or who are just victims of this youth violence. If you are a victim of youth violence or you know someone who is continually being hurt you must tell a trusted adult to help you stop whatever is happening to you or the person you may know. Another thing that we can do to stop youth violence is to educate parents to be better role models for their kids because of course we don't want kids to pick up the same bad behaviors that their parents may have. No matter how bad things are in your lives, parents need to be a good positive role models for their kids. If you don't want your children to be a part of this youth violence you need to teach them right from wrong. Teaching our youth always starts in the home. Of course, there are always outside influences but if they begin knowing right from wrong and are not allowed to watch violent T.V. shows or movies, then maybe just maybe we can start preventing some of this crazy youth violence.

All in all, the way youth violence has started is not a way to start life. We should try our hardest in whatever way we can to stop this thing called youth violence. We need to eliminate or ban all of the outside bad influences that we have control over to limit the T.V. shows, movies and violent games. Also to continue making kids and adults knowledgeable about bullying and the peer pressure that kids are experiencing. If everyone helps in some way or another to stop youth violence then maybe, just maybe we will have a safer world for the kids of today and the kids of the future to live in.

Someone once said, "To stop the growth of youth violence, you need to understand its roots."

Zachary P. 7th Grade

YOUTH VIOLENCE

"Are you alright son?" asked the doctor as he placed the boy's arm in a sling. The boy's response was "Yes", claiming that he fell down a flight of stairs. The doctor eyed him very suspiciously and said, "You are lying, you were beaten up, by a bully, weren't you?" The boy answered that he was and then started to explain while forcing tears back into his eyes. He continued, "I was on my way home from school when the school bully was waiting for me nearby. When I turned the corner he attacked me." This boy's story is one of many that occur every year due to the horrors of youth violence.

"Son, please don't do it!" Pleaded the boy's parents just as he was about to jump to his fate. In response the boy said he would rather die than endure bullying throughout high school, and then he jumped. This young man decided to end his life because of the negative impact of youth violence. Youth violence can change a person entirely even after only one bad encounter. Children ages 8-17 make up the majority of victims exposed to youth violence. I have had personal experiences with youth violence in the form of being bullied for an extended period of time. The effects of bullying and youth violence are serious and long lasting. My exposure to bullying has made me feel self conscious, demoralized and fearful. Not only have I been personally bullied before, the sight of youth violence with others has made me particularly sensitive to the issue and impact youth violence has on not only the victim but the instigator as well.

"Stop hitting me, why are you doing this to me?" This is the innocent voice of a helpless child as he suffers at the hands of a bully. Every action has a reason of some kind, no matter how illogical it may seem. Some of the most common causes of youth violence are: depiction of violence in media, such as television, video games and internet sites, exposure to violence in the home, low self esteem or a desire to intimidate others in order to feel better about one self. The fact that children would engage in such despicable behavior makes me worry about the number of violent youths existing in today's world.

As bad and extensive as youth violence is, there are many things people can do to squash this issue. On a local level, it is up to parents, teachers and peers to stay involved with children to discourage bullying and other types of violence. Education about the risks and impact of youth violence is essential. Parents need to know what their children are doing, who their friends are and what activities they participate in so that parents can detect if there is a problem. Friends must not turn the other cheek if they see a problem arise. Involvement is important to everyone. On a global level, there are organizations designed to help youths and discourage them from getting involved in negative activities. Youth violence is a worldwide problem that cannot be ignored. A small effort by everyone can slowly rid the world of youth violence.

Clearly, youth violence has several causes and far reaching effects on all who are exposed to it. The consequences are sometimes permanent and cannot be reversed. The bottom line is that this issue is not going away easily. It will take a lot of work and effort by adults and children alike to come up with an effective resolution. It is a critical issue which cannot be ignored any longer.

Savannah S 7th Grade

FINDING A SOLUTION

Violence happens every day.
And hurts us all in some way.
Whether its making us scared at night.
Or losing a loved one in a gang fight.
But why? Is the question that gives me a hunch.
What pushes these adolescents to throw a punch?
Here is where it all starts,
Entertainment, peer pressure and jealousy definitely take part.
Every child needs a parent who is loving, caring and who they can trust.
Being a good role model is definitely a must.
To prevent these children from learning what's wrong,
We must teach them what is right when they are young.
Whether it's teaching a lot of kids at a school,
Or having a private session with one or two.
Both of which will do but we must take initiative,
An opportunity to these kids is our responsibility to give.
This could take weeks, months or even years,
But in the end we will save tons of tears.
As a community we must bind,
There are always doors opened but the key is ours to find.

Ceirán C
8th Grade

YOUTH VIOLENCE

A boy in the crowd rushes into the lunch line. As the children in the crowd come together it is a jumble. From behind the boy hears, "Hey!" which a bigger child yelled. The boy turns to the sound, WHACK! The bigger child sucker punches the smaller kid. The boy falls to the ground, the bigger one starts to stomp on the boy's stomach, chest, and face. All while a gym teacher fully capable of stopping the fight, stands four feet away and just watches as it unfolds. It takes forever for the attack to end. The smaller boy ended up with a closed head injury, a broken nose, severely bruised abdominal wall, and ribs, not to mention a case of post traumatic stress disorder. This boy was me. I spent time in the hospital and had to have surgery to rebuild what had been damaged. The kid who did this to me got off with a slap on the wrist, eighteen months of parole. Nothing more even though this was not the first time the kid harmed someone. It was only the worst case. This is how youth violence has affected me. There are millions more cases just like mine and billions to come. We need to know what the causes of youth violence are, where it happens most, and what you can do about youth violence.

Most cases of youth violence are related to the media. Children get in their minds that strong and violent reactions are a way to deal with situations. In movies, the men are testosterone filled "Bad Boys" and the women are beautiful, sexy, whores. The media is centered on sex and violence. When what children should be learning is how to get good grades and limiting enemies and getting friends. We need to make our heroes people who are intelligent, not the Hulk or the "Live Free or Die Hard" guy, but the iron man, some really smart person who is rich and solves immense crimes with his mind. The whole idea that that is what is "cool" is corrupting young minds in the media world.

My opinion is that youth violence normally occurs at lunch period and in the halls when students are changing classes. In my experience it happened in the lunch line, out of the blue! People will not present their problems to a teacher instead of just hitting the other person in frustration. The one who will not win the fight will not go tattle to the teacher. The problem will just be exacerbated by the teacher coming to his defense. The teacher needs to tell the other teachers to watch out for this kid. Walk near him, look at him, and tell every one else he is in you "scopes." We need to eliminate the places the violence can happen so there will be less violence.

Some of the ways you can eliminate school violence is to donate to the schools, and demand with the money some safety meshes are put up like more video cameras in different places, more school security, having the teachers posted at regular posts in the halls during the bell. You need to demand the school's cooperation with some other parents. Turn the school in to a community by involving parents and children as leaders. Parents should come together and decide the direction in which the school should go. Use the principal as the face of the community and turn him/her into an ambassador. You send your children to the school; take control of their safety so that they can make preparations for their tomorrows!

This is what school violence is about. We need to take control of the school, eliminate the violence zones and teach our kids to be more aware of violence in the media. There is nothing worse to a boy's pride and self-respect than to look weak in front of his friends. I had to go through that and I do not want any other child to go through what I went through.

Amanda D
8th Grade

PEACE CONQUERS ALL

Easter was the day
The day my cousin's inner light faded away
Just turned 17 with high school almost done
But that came to a halt because of a gun
Who knew one small mistake
Is what it had to take
Maybe if her sister hadn't picked up the gun
But what's done is done
No maybes can get back Kasey's light
No matter the might
If only there were no such thing as war
And we could love some more
But "if onlys" won't change the United States
"If onlys" can't change our fates
It's up to us to take a stand
So take my hand
Live in peace for Kasey's sake
Live in peace for all people whose lives a gun will take

~~ In Loving Memory of Kasey Julia Joanne Dargis 4.10.1989 - 4/16/2006 ~~

Benjamin Di 7th Grade

Violence entered my life while I was in Kindergarten. Unfortunately, it lasted many years until I entered 7th grade. I believe that the many forms of bullying I experienced during my school years, are definitely shaping the person I am. My hope (as well as my parents') is that this can bring a positive spin on the person I will become as an adult. Not able to speak for the bully, but as the target of many bullies, this has brought up many different feelings and reactions. There is not one single reason why kids bully, but there are many.

My family moves a lot because my dad is transferred with his job. My parents have put me in public as well as private schools and religious schools. In Kindergarten, I was tested and placed in the gifted program. In second grade, I was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome. I have been punched (sometimes in the privates). I have been picked on. I have had stuff stolen. I have had death threats. I have had wedgies, been screamed at, laughed at, kicked, been joked about. Sometimes I would be put into detention because the teacher or the lunch lady wouldn't really find out what was happening. This definitely made me communicate what happened more clearly. My mom would cry and my dad would say "one day those jerks will be working for you." My parents would try to work with the teacher, then the principal. When nothing would really change, my parents would change my school. Including preschool, I have been to eleven schools. I have learned to be more cautious and faster. I believe I have become more determined. Also, I am thankful for my growth spurt.

There are many reasons why I think kids are violent. I have been targeted a lot because I like learning and I am good at it. My tics happen more often when I am excited or stressed out in a bad way. This makes bullying even worse when this happens.

Some kids bully because someone is different. Youth violence may be caused by what happens at the bully's house, or what happened to the bully at an earlier time. I have seen both boys and girls be bullies. Maybe it is the violence on TV and video games. Maybe it is because the bully is jealous. Maybe there is less respect like my parents have said. Maybe the bully is just a really bad kid. It doesn't really matter to me why they bully. What really matters is how to stop the bully.

There have been many ways I have tried to stop the violence. I can tell the bully to stop, and if that doesn't work, then tell a teacher. I have tried to be friends with someone that the bully doesn't pick on. One year the school told my parents to take a class to teach me how to deal with bullies. I wonder if the bully's parents had to go to class to teach them to stop being a bully. I don't think anything really works unless the parents, teacher and the school agree to deal with the bully. If there aren't any rules that they follow, then why would a bully follow them? I have been to one school in eleven that completely eliminated the bullying. The classes were grouped with kids that were in the same learning level. They also taught us to appreciate our differences rather than make fun of them. The school talked about many differences; for example, in learning and religion. They were teaching us that even the teachers were different. Unfortunately, we moved, but that was a great school.

Violence has affected my life. I know that there are plenty of reasons or excuses why kids bully. Maybe when I am older I will figure out a way to eliminate it, like give them a lobotomy. Bullying affects the whole family just like criminals. If it isn't dealt with, it will get worse. But right now, I am thankful to be done with this writing project, my new height, my new deep voice and my birthday coming up!

Sophia G

6th Grade

Violence and the Youth of Today

Violence has been around since the beginning of time. Ever since the first humans picked up rocks and sticks to fight each other with for the rights of food, objects, or land. It sounds kind of familiar. Just like the stories on the news programs today. People fighting and using violence over the same basic things that we all need to survive. Even worse, is some of the unimportant things that make people do violent things. Adults have been fighting with each other for a very long time, so I don't know why they are so surprised when they see and hear children turn to violence. Who are we supposed to look up to, when violence of all types is all around us? Who are we to trust, when adults tell us to do one thing and then to go ahead and do another? What are we supposed to have hope in, when the whole world seems to be fighting with each other? Violence has affected many of us on a personal level. There are many reasons for the causes of violence, many of which effect the youth of today. Hopefully, we can find some answers to help stop children from being violent and becoming a bigger part of the problem.

I'm sure that there are many families who have been lucky enough not to have experienced any types of major violence in their lives. But for those of us who have gone through different types of crimes, it can be something that changes your life forever. My family and my home have been affected by several different types of crimes in the past. Our house has been vandalized with spray paint. My Dad's car was broken into one time, and our house has been broken into twice. My parents say we live in a good neighborhood and that we live in a safe city. So, I guess no place is really safe. We now park the cars in the garage at all times. I have to be sure I put away all of my toys after playing outside. My Dad has to change all the locks and put up security lights outside. The one part of all of these stories that is the same that the Police always told my parents, "Oh, it was just probably some kids." They never heard from the Police again. Maybe catching the kids behind these small crimes would keep them from growing up to do bigger crimes. Sometimes, I still get nervous at night that someone may break into my house. I don't even like watching the news, like my Dad tells me to, because it always seems to be so sad and all the stories are about violence in America and all over the world.

So, what are the causes of all this violence in people? I don't even know what to think. My Mom thinks that most people are nice and it's just a few bad people that make the headlines. My Dad says that everybody can be bad and you have to work hard at being nice. I don't like the way that sounds. I know adults have a lot of reasons for why kids do bad things. Adults will say that movies we

see are too violent or the video games we play are too violent. Well, who makes movies and video games? They blame broken homes and gangs. Well, who gets divorced and doesn't spend time with their kids? Adults will blame a bad educational system and drug abuse by children. But, who is in charge of our schools? Grown-ups always tell us that we are the leaders of the future, but how can they complain about us if this is the way they are leading us? We the children learn from example and we need positive role models in our lives to grow up to be positive people and help our communities to grow together.

Solving the problems of the world, well I guess you need to leave it up to us, 12-year-olds! I know I don't have all of the answers, but maybe some of the things I have heard of can help if people try a little harder. After school programs provided through the schools and parks as well as other community organizations like "Boys and Girls Clubs," can help keep kids busy with friends and fun activities. Maybe when kids do commit crimes, they can try more fun things to do, instead of putting them in jail or juvenile centers. Parents definitely need to take more interest in their children's lives. Not only to protect them from violence, but also to keep them from committing violence upon others. I try to be a good person and not commit violence on others. I also try telling my friends that they shouldn't be mean or do bad things to others. Maybe at school, we could have a rally against violence for all the students to attend. Bringing this message to homes and telling them to our families may help remind them to be more helpful to those that they see every day. After awhile, maybe people will start to work out their problems without violence. This is a big dream, but violence doesn't help; it only hurts.

The problem of violence in youth is a very difficult problem to solve. There are many reasons why kids do violent things just like adults do. I don't know if there will ever be a cure for everything. I don't know if there can be. Even though people have disagreements, from what type of shoes you wear to what religion you believe in or what color your skin is, we need to accept each other for our differences rather than to keep each other apart. We have so much to learn from other people. The United States is the most culturally diverse country in the world and we should set an example for everybody else that we can get along with each other. Maybe it's time for us kids to show the adults that you don't need violence to solve problems. Maybe as leaders of tomorrow, we need to start leading today.

Katelynn J 7th Grade

1995 started as a regular day, kids at school, people in their cars on their way to work, until 9:02 a.m. At 9:02 a.m. is when chaos hit in the United States, more specifically Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The bombing of this building was the biggest terrorism attack in America until the September 11th attack. At least \$653 million worth of damage was done. One-third of this building was destroyed at 9:02 a.m. The car that contained the bomb was parked at the drop-off part of the building's day care center at 9:01 a.m. Over 680 people were injured; 168 were killed, and over 1,800 9-1-1 calls were made. On May 5th is when people stopped looking for people, after 17 days of continuous searching from over 12,000 people. On April 19, 2000, five years to the day, President Bill Clinton dedicated a memorial worth \$29 million. It is known as the Oklahoma City National Memorial. The memorial is where the building was. In a field on the south side of the memorial is where bronze and stone chairs are. These empty chairs are supposed to represent all the empty chairs at the dinner tables of the families who lost a dear friend or loved one. The chairs are in order by which floor they were on. The chairs also are smaller for the ones that stand as a reminder of children; the bigger chairs stand as a reminder of those who died as adults. One of those chairs stands for my grandpa. It took a week to find him. Because of a horrible cruel man, I never got to meet my grandpa, never got to share my memories with him, never got to talk to him, never got to give him a hug. He never even got to see me either, hold me as a baby. Neither of us even got to say I love you to the other. That is how violence has affected my life.

Things that cause youth violence include insecurity and not enough attention from family and/or friends. If a child is insecure with themselves, they will hurt other people to make themselves feel better. Even if it is just verbal abuse, it makes them feel better and the victim worse. Verbal abuse can still scar someone for life. Physical abuse can also scar someone for life. They could end up in the hospital or worse, dead. Some people get so upset from being bullied, they commit suicide. If people don't get enough attention at home, they try to get attention at school by beating people up or making fun of them. Those are a few causes of youth violence.

One way I can stop youth violence is report it if I see it. If you see it, then go to a teacher or guidance counselor to tell them. You could also stop youth violence by not bullying people or make fun of other people. Also, you could make a support group for kids trying to recover from youth violence. If you take action in any of these, you could make a big difference in youth violence.

Zachary M

6th Grade

I consider myself very lucky because violence has not directly affected me. However, my grandmother was a victim of violence two years ago when she was mugged in the parking lot of a Home Depot. The person that mugged my grandmother, stole her purse and knocked her down. She got a broken collar bone and bruises on her face. In a way, I guess I was affected by the violence that happened to my grandmother because when I saw her, I was sad and a little scared. I think after my grandmother was mugged, my mom and dad were a lot more scared about what happened to her than I was because I was still just a little kid. I do remember that when we would get out of the car to go somewhere that my mom and dad would be very careful about looking around to see who was around so that we would be safe. The only other way I think violence has affected my life is when my mom and dad tell me that I am not allowed to watch certain television programs or movies because of the violence in them. I hear the same thing from my mom and dad about playing my older brother's games.

I think that some of the causes of youth violence may be because of some of the television shows that kids might be watching. I think some kids might try to act out some of the things that they see on movies. As well as some of the video games that kids play where there is killing and blood and fighting, kids might try some of these things out also. Some youth violence might be because of the gangs that kids form and fight with each other over stupid things. Some violence caused by kids might be things that they learned at home because violence is happening at their home and they see it all the time and think it is an okay thing to do. Some youth violence, I think, might be just kids being mean and bullying other kids because they are just mean or they might be jealous of other kids.

Some things that I could do about youth violence are, if I was to hear about something that was going to happen that involved violence, I could tell a grown up or a policeman so that maybe some way they could stop something bad from happening. If I was to see a fight about to start, maybe I could try to talk to the people about to fight and get them to stop. Maybe I could tell my friends and classmates not to watch television programs with violence in them. That way, maybe they will not try to act out violent things that they see on television. Instead of kids doing youth violence, I would like to encourage them to play sports and join teams and learn ways to work together to have fun. Finally, maybe I could encourage school to teach kids different ways to deal with their anger and violence.

Angelina O

8th Grade

Pop! Pop! Pop! It happened that fast, within 30 seconds I had lost my best friend. I ran outside to find him face down with three bullet wounds in his back. I'm terrified. All I can do is cry. Violence has taken another one of my friends yet again. Sometimes I just sit back and wonder "Why?" What has the world come to where people are scared to venture outside? Since this incident there's no doubt that I have changed. I severely doubt that I could ever be the same again. Just thinking about such acts of violence I can't help but think about Jamal. I think this could've been avoided if he wasn't hanging around with those wannabe dope boys (drug dealers). He had a couple problems at home as did I, he lived in a bad neighborhood as did I, and he hung out with dope boys as did I. So how is it I am the one that is still alive? Unlike Jamal I didn't let my issues at home control my whole life; I moved out of the bad neighborhoods; I got out of that mentality that I would never be anything but a drug dealer like my friends. I got my mind right, and I was helping Jamal see what his future could've held... sadly, he saw too late. I think the friends we had were the main reason Jamal died; if we hadn't been hanging out with those kinds of people he would still be here today. I chose to not become a statistic, I moved out of the bad neighborhoods, although where I live now isn't all that different it's better than where I was. The reason why we had gotten into that life style was our issues at home. For me, it was my mother, for him it was his father. Hanging out with our friends was our way of escaping. He got shot because of jealousy. He had everything and the other guys were jealous he had a great girlfriend, all the best outfits, a lot of money; the other guys thought he was a challenge so they decided to eliminate the competition. Before this horrific act of violence he was getting so much better. He was getting out of that lifestyle like me. He said when he got out we were going to help other children regardless of what it was we did to help them. He said, "I don't want any other children to go through what I had gone through." We probably were going to volunteer at a children's center or do the "Brother from another Mother" program. Even though he is gone, I still plan on helping unfortunate children. For example, maybe I could read to them, which would make a big difference. I wish I could've had someone read to me when I was little, sit it would be very positive. This whole essay is about youth violence and how we can stop it. Jamal Johnson was 14 years old when he died. He could've still been here today if we didn't have so much youth violence in this world. I choose to help our youth today. I don't want other mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, or even girlfriends to have to go through what I experienced. I want to make a difference and help people. That's what Jamal would've wanted.

Olivia S.

Grade 8th

I saw it, I saw it all. My eyes were attached to the scene. I couldn't help myself. With every punch thrown and every shove and hit, my eyes grew wider and wider. It was like a movie, an action movie. I stood in disbelief. Was I really witnessing this, or was it all some kind of messed up dream? But as I continued watching it began to become more real. The weakness and agony in the victim's face haunted me; it was like a call for help. Did I do anything about it? No, I couldn't stand up to the bully, he was twice my size. Besides, I didn't even know the kid that longed for my help. All of these thoughts rushed through my head. What could I do anyway; I'm not strong and certainly not big enough to match up to the guy throwing the punches. Though I wasn't going to do anything about it I continued to watch. After the victim was lying on the ground, weak and injured with his own blood surrounding him the bully stepped back as if he had accomplished what he wanted.

The bully looked in my direction. I tried to act as if I didn't see anything. I felt his eyes still watching me, he approached me and told me that if I tell anyone about what I just saw, then I'm next. Bullying is a very serious problem. I knew I had to tell someone, but I wouldn't want to end up like the last guy. I pretended to forget about it but it kept haunting me in my sleep. The poor kid suffering with pain and anguish. After three sleepless nights, I decided that telling a teacher I could trust would help me. Luckily I knew the right one to tell, Mrs. Surpen. When I told her about what I had experienced, she looked at me in shock. She was very glad I told her but upset that I hadn't told her sooner. She said it is always best to tell a teacher or trusted adult right away, even if you aren't the victim. I agreed to tell her right away if I ever witness something like that again. The whole experience affected me in a way that will change my look on life. It taught me to be more careful.

Youth violence is a very serious issue. It happens all the time whether something is done about it or not. Youth violence affects me because it is going on all around me. It goes on at school, on the streets that I ride by, and even sometimes in public places. The scare of youth violence has caused me to be more aware of my surroundings. I make sure I know where I am going, when, and why. NO matter how careful am though, violence still happens.

There are many probable causes for youth violence. Some of which include, insecurity and jealousy, someone thinking they are better than someone else, and possibly even the bully was and/or are abused. Many bullies hurt other people because they have built up anger inside of them that they take out on other people. They want to feel superior and in charge. Bullies usually don't bully just because they feel like it. The bully sometimes doesn't even know the person they are bullying but thinks that they can hurt them and wants to prove they can. There can be problems at home for the bully. For example, a divorce, being abused at home themselves, having a bad relationship with their family, or even not having a family at all. The situation of a bully is often not known because the bully doesn't want to admit it because they want to seem tough.

There are ways to stop violence. They may not always work but it is definitely worth a try. The victim and if there is a witness of the abuse whether it is physical or mental the witness and victim should tell a trusted adult. That way the adult can take care of the bully and keep the victim protected. The adult can help the situation and not let it happen again. A witness could stick up for the victim also but sometimes that leads to the bully starting to abuse he witness too. The safest way to handle the situation is to tell someone. If the bully threatens to hurt you even worse or possibly kill the victim or witness if they tell someone then it might be scary to tell someone then it might be scary to tell. But it is always important to tell someone, the adult can hopefully make sure that the bully does not go anywhere near the kids he/she threatened. The adult can take care of the situation and make the kids feel safe.

At the end of the day, there is always going to be some type of youth violence. Many people, including myself are affected by it. This is because it is all around me, at school, on the streets, and in public places. The causes of youth violence are envy, and troubles at home. There are few ways to help prevent youth violence. These ways are; tell a trusted adult as soon as possible, stick up for a victim and always be careful of what you're doing and saying. Youth violence is like a disease, there is a treatment, but not a cure.

Rachael T 6th Grade

By the age of seven you have your mind set,
Youth violence affects everyone that you met.
You may be a bully or a smart child,
I've been teased and bullied yet it was mild.
I am just an inch shorter and very smart,
I am kind and have a caring heart.
I get called a loser and get called a nerd,
But I ignore it like an everyday bird.
My house has an alarm system and a fence,
To keep out youth robbers whose hearts are so dense.

By the age of seven you have your mind set,
This behavior is probably great I bet.
For some of these kids their behavior went mad,
The examples set by their parents were bad.
Youth violence also occurs because kids were abused,
This means children have been injured, hurt or bruised.
These kids' siblings may do drugs or start drinking,
These youths were violent or just weren't thinking.
These are some reasons youth violence breaks out,
I just hope you decide to pick the right route.

By the age of seven you have your mind set,
You may be fine or you may just be upset.
There are lots we can do to stop youths being violent,
Like taking a stand and now being silent.
I want to help the people and to listen,
I want to help make their inner self glisten.
I will continue to be selfless and kind,
To animals and to the rest of mankind.
Youth violence is a very upsetting truth,
And the worst part is it's because of youths.

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Nothing makes a more lasting impression on young people than acknowledging and rewarding their efforts. Through the generosity of **Florida Crystals Corporation** we are hosting the "Top 10" students, their parents and teachers from each of the participating middle schools at the recognition luncheon on May 10th, 2010. Florida Crystals underwrote the costs of the luncheon and of sending the Palm Beach County ambassadors to Washington, D.C. this summer. We are grateful for Florida Crystals' financial support and for the active participation of **Mr. & Mrs. J. Pepe Fanjul, Jr.** in organizing the Palm Beach County effort. Florida Crystals, headquartered in Palm Beach County is North America's largest sugar producer.

Each middle school Principal who took the effort to make sure that a significant number of students from his or her school participated in the challenge has received a \$500 gift from the **William H. Pitt Foundation**. We thank the foundation for underwriting the cost of these "no strings attached" grants. The William H. Pitt Foundation is headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut and Palm Beach, Florida. **Robert G. Simses, Esq.**, the Foundation's President and COO and its local Directors, **Lesly Smith**, former Mayor of Palm Beach and **Mrs. Pauline Pitt**, are strongly committed to reducing violence in Florida's public school system.

The thoughts and ideas of the "Top 10" best students who participated in the challenge have been published in this book for the benefit of all who care about the problem of youth violence and struggle to do something about it.

The entire cost of this publication was underwritten by a grant from the **William H. Pitt Foundation**. This book is dedicated to the Foundation with grateful appreciation for all they do to help young people across America. We also thank our typesetter, Doreen Flynn and Bill and Patti Vitale, Vital Printing Corp. for their contributions to this publication.

The law firm of **Larmoyeux & Bone, PL**, underwrote most of the administrative costs for organizing and directing the efforts of the Palm Beach County Steering Committee. Volunteers from the firm include: Bill Bone Esq., Aimee Kelley, Elsa Martinez, Liz Townsend, Jeff Chapin and Eric Westman, a graduate of Palm Beach Atlantic University employed by the law firm.

We thank other organizations and volunteers: **The School District of Palm Beach County** for putting this program into the middle schools and especially **Dr. Arthur C. Johnson**, Superintendent, for his personal commitment to this event, **Dr. Ann Killels**, Chief of Staff, and **Liz Perlman**, Director of Curriculum for Palm Beach County Schools; **The Prevention Center** in the Department of Safe Schools for their experience working with the issues of youth violence, especially **Kim Williams**, Assistant Director; Prevention Center; and **Dr. Alison Adler**, Chief of Safety and Learning Division; **The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office** for their efforts to prevent youth violence and combat the problem before it starts, especially **Ric Bradshaw**, Palm Beach County Sheriff, **Captain Jeffrey Lindscoog**, Community Services Division, and **Cpl. Rafael Duran**, Training Officer. **Elaine Weber** and Elaine Weber Designs, Inc. for creating the original cover and **Elaine Meier** for her help in promoting this year's "Do The Write Thing" Challenge.

JUDGING COMMITTEE

Reading and judging all the writings submitted by the 13,772 Palm Beach County students who participated in the 2010 Challenge was an enormous undertaking that would not be possible without the assistance of the teachers, administrators and staff of the participating middle schools together with the members of the Local Steering Committee who made certain that every student who submitted a writing was considered.

We are grateful to **Lourdes Fanjul** for Chairing the Young Women's committee and **Circuit Court Judge Ronald Alvarez** for chairing the Young Men's committee. Two other independent judges were instrumental in organizing the process and selecting the finalists and they are **Mary Simses, Esq.** a philanthropist and community volunteer and **Arthur Bullard**, executive assistant to the Mayor of City of West Palm Beach.

Additional people involved in the judging process are:

Congressman Ted Deutch, 19th Congressional District lead by **Darcy Farnan**, District Representative, and their support team: Courtney Bafer, District Representative, Jill Benson, District Representative, and Lauren Berger, District Representative.

Dr. Arthur C. Johnson, Superintendent, The School District of Palm Beach County and **Liz Perlman**, Director of Curriculum for Palm Beach County Schools and their team, Dr. Ann Killets, Chief of Staff, Tara Smith, Jennifer Zumpano, and Angela Fitch, K-12 Curriculum.

Kim Williams, Assistant Director of the Prevention Center, Department of Safe Schools and **Margaret Kallman**, Specialist, and the Prevention Center team.

Sheriff Ric Bradshaw, The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and his team of volunteers led by **Captain Jeff Lindskoog** and **Cpl. Rafael Duran**.

Honorable Carey Haughwout, Palm Beach County Public Defender and **Jennifer Loyless** and numerous hard working Assistant Public Defenders from the Juvenile Division.

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Work hard. Get better every day. Stay humble. Be patient. Be thankful.

Those words hang in Davone's locker, guiding him through the good times and bad.

We appreciate his words, actions and inspiration to all our young people.