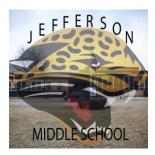


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The best of Jefferson Middle School

Posted in **CULTURE** by <u>Smile Politely Editors</u> on Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at 9:00 am



Every year Jefferson Middle School participates in National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID), a nationwide event aimed at openly engaging the parents of African American students. But this year's NAAPID event coordinator, 7th grade English Language Arts teacher, Mallory Morris, sees the event as an opportunity to reach a much broader constituency.

"NAAPID officially stands for National African American Involvement Day," Morris told Smile Politely earlier this week, "however I think that with that understanding, Jefferson is

continually striving to create a school climate where all parents feel equally welcomed. The only way we can be most effective as educators is if we put forth the effort to engage all of our parents in order to meet the needs of every student."

In an effort to acheive this goal, Morris decided to hold an essay contest this year as a way to showcase the broad interests and the fiery passions of JMS's student body. The contest was structured so that students from each grade level responded to the question: *What aspect of your community would you like to change and what will you do to change it*?

Winners were given a gift certificate, an opportunity to read their essay at a school luncheon and publication in Smile Politely.

After reviewing a great deal of entries from all three grade levels, the judges ultimately decided on four winners: **Zach Jeffers** won in the sixth grade's pool, **Jade Shackelford** won in the seventh grade pool while **Jaelyne Noelle McDowell** and **Cheyenne Andel** tied for the eighth grade prize.

There were also two honorable mentions: Alec Shedelbower, a seventh grader, and Ashler Uebele, an eighth grader.

The following essays represent only a fraction of the drive and the potential possessed by Jefferson Middle School's very talented student body.

Sixth Grade Winner: Zach Jeffers

My community has robberies, gangs and drugs. I know this because my friend who lives right down the street had his bicycle stolen from his garage. The bike was stolen in the amount of time it took him to walk down to my house. The drugs, I rarely see them but it still shocks me

Low on Pho?

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Two Updates: Same Sex Sunday podcast is up and ready to go. Nekromancy: The Reunion at Chester Street Bar (Monday night) See above for info.

Posted by Tracy Nectoux to the entry 'The Rainbow Connection: January 11–17 on 01/16/11.



UPDATE: David Howie at Emerald City Lounge, tonight. See above for info.

Posted by Tracy Nectoux to the entry 'The Rainbow Connection: January 11–17 on 01/13/11.



Let me just say that we have the most amazing customers! Love you all, seriously. The cloth diapering community is full of cool people. Unfortunately, there are still too many people that have never heard of us. I would have the user the proved to spread. With

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to see them. I have found them laying different places. If I find them I will break the bottles or get the cigarettes wet. Also the gangs have taken over my favorite place to go in the summer. Gangs have destroyed the beautiful place that my friends and me love. We see graffiti and trash along with other stuff. There used to be frogs, snakes, fish and other animals there. But since the gangs have been coming there we haven't seen any animals yet. I would like to see the gangs leave this area and guit being so selfish about our place and think of others.

One aspect I would change would be the gang meeting place. The reasons are that the burglaries will stop happening in our community. Also, people will feel safer in their homes at night. This might also keep kids from getting in with the wrong crowd and help them fix their lives. Lastly, this would help keep our special place cleaner.

What I will do to change the gang meeting place is pick up all the garbage and wash off the graffiti. I could also walk down there with an adult. I'd try to bring some wildlife to release back to the area. Also I could try to find someone to get these criminals on film when they are vandalizing and doing drugs or drinking. I could save up and plant new trees and fix up things with the help of my friends.

In conclusion I want the gangs gone and all the natural scenery back. Also, I'd like to see all the things they have destroyed fixed. I still think there is hope for my friends and I special place, but it is going to take some effort and time. I am willing to help do things to get my special place back.

Seventh Grade Winner: Jade Shackelford

I think that the world now is way different than the world we've always dreamt it would be. In the world today, all I see is little boys with their pants falling on the ground and smoking because they think its cool. And then you see girls with no clothes on trying to look cute and prostituting all over the place. There's perverted little boys that act the way they do in part because girls let them. All I see is not so popular boys and girls getting made fun of because they have problems that no one will address and all I'm wondering is, what happened to the love? What happened to our community?

I know, as well as everyone else that these children know how to act. They know that they shouldn't be doing what they are doing. And I now that they were taught better than this. The world in my eyes was clearly not meant to be this way. The reason why, to me, that children think that its okay is because of the peer pressure and the idea that other kids put into their heads. It is common that other kids have problems at home, but shouldn't that give them a bigger chance to better themselves?

I really do think that I could change the behavior of these children because I am a child. I want my voice to be heard, I want to change the way that children act by addressing their situations and not ignoring them. I know this will take time and I'm willing to work however long it takes to get this community back on its feet.

Another big problem today is seeing little black boys acting up in class and I wonder if they realize how much worse it looks compared to a white boy acting up. We have to try to prove that we are just as great. There are still many prejudiced people in the world and the first thing that they notice is your skin color. The second you mess up they can hold that against you. We need to turn around our behavior to the point where it doesn't matter if we are black or white, because we are all equal.

I want little boys and girls to know that they've got someone on their side and I'm here to stay. They need to know that they don't have to be scared or feel like they have to do what other kids do. One by one we will let them know that they don't have to do bad things to be heard. I'm going to change this community. I'm going to be heard — not just for me, but for us

Eight Grade Co-Winner: Cheyenne Andel

As a citizen of the Champaign-Urbana community I would personally like to change the way we think about poverty. If you asked any student at Jefferson Middle School whether they've ever helped out at a soup kitchen or started a clothing drive, chances are they'd answer "no." And the reason for this? Not enough time in the day, sports and homework taking up too much scheduling space, and some would even say they're too cool to help out. These things are no excuse - or at least they shouldn't be. This is true, not only of the kids at JMS, but also of many people in our neighborhoods, workplaces and even random people on the street. I

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Another "genius" synthesis of the MSU/Illini game. Good analysis, Rob. I depend on your opinion over any other journalist around here. I have to say that the foul-calling was pretty spotty and inconsistent, but at least it wasn't lopsided—except for that egregious miss on Bill Cole's 3...

By Mel F. to the entry 'The butterfly on 01/20/11.



I'd be interested in hearing stories from victims of drive-by artwork.

By Rob McColley to the entry 'Paradox leaves his mark on the town on 01/20/11.



Young and Alone just hit Hendricks House last night... DI has pictures that match up to the

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would like for more people to participate in a local clothing drive and/or make soup for the soup kitchen.

I know from actual experience how it feels to go through barely getting by. Having it happen isn't fun. Your parents get stressed out and you cannot help but feel like you're the one to blame. That's why I stress the importance of helping out the poor. Even though you may not think it now, you may be this way later on in life and need help. I know if you took fifteen minutes to an hour a week to make soup for the soup kitchen you would be helping out more people than you could possibly imagine. At <u>www.feedillinois.org</u> you can find the closest food kitchen near you. Once you get there, who knows - you might even like it and decide to stay a while and help serve it?

As you may know, the owners of Salt and Light have recently been visited by the famous Ty Pennington. The owners had mortgaged their very own house to save Salt and Light. If you don't know what Salt and Light is, it's a place where you can drop off old clothing, furniture, dishes (pretty much anything) and they open it up for people to come through and get what they need. I'm not saying that we all have to go to the extreme like they did, I'm just saying that dropping off some clothes every now and the, or volunteering to help during the day wouldn't hurt. At <u>www.saltandlightministry.org</u> you can find when you're open. There's even a spot where you can fill out an entry form and submit it so you can volunteer there! Taking the first step is the hardest, but after that it's a walk in the park.

I know you may think, well yeah she has good points, but what does she plan on doing with them? At my church, every second Wednesday of the month we have a service day. I take part in this because I like to give back to my community. Instead of just volunteering once a month, I'm going to propose that we volunteer twice a month. But just you wait, what we do in these groups are folding newspapers for the humane society, baking food for the church, making soup for the soup kitchen and courtyard cleanups. I'm going to suggest that we do something with a food or clothing drive. I want to get more involved with the poverty area and help as much as possible. Having my church be included in this is my way of recruiting people. I will make posters and signs and get a large box for them to place the items in.

As you can see, there are more important ways to participate than you think. Having a part in your community is very important. If you help people now, people will want to help you in the future. Not only for that fact, but also for the reason that it will make a difference. You may not think it will, but in someone's eyes, they'll be grateful for what you did. So make time for a little volunteering, because taking the first step is hard, but after that its a walk in the park.

Eight Grade Co-Winner: Jaelyne Noelle McDowell

Imagine how it would feel knowing that you had no place to lay your head at night, no food to eat, no money to buy important things and no place to call your home. Poverty is all around and is becoming a bigger issue over the years. Why not make a difference in someone else's life? Every little thing counts and just think about how many lives you could help save. Think about how many people you could take off the street if you to just give a dollar.

As a One step I will take to help reduce the number of impoverished people in my community is collecting canned goods from people. It's always a plus when you don't have to buy your own food. Another reason I think collecting canned goods is a step closer to reducing poverty is because when you have someone helping you out with the necessities you can maybe save your money and build up an "emergency fund" or that can be one less thing you have to worry about providing!

Starting an informational group about the poverty in local communities is something else I would do to help reduce the amount of poverty rates. Gathering people and makingthem aware of the problems people around them face can help because they can have sympathy for them and might want to get involved. It's sad to say but some people know very little about the poverty in their community and it's a big issue because when poverty hits everyone around you it becomes harder for you to be successful - especially when you have to pay taxes to keep these people on welfare checks. Besides, why would you want to let children starve or roam



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the streets without a clue as to where their next meal is going to come from?

Another reason to start an information group aimed at reducing poverty is because people need to know what lays among them and their families. When there are people going through poverty, they will do just about anything to make ends meet. Helping put food on someone's table is better than having women sell their bodies, men pimping tricks and young teenagers selling drugs! The informational meetings should be held someplace people feel comfortable going. I would recommend locations such as local schools, the YMCA, the Park District building or someplace open to the public.

I think another step I would take to help reduce poverty in Champaign is to have a food and clothing drive. Having a food and clothing drive is a great way to reach out to your community. Not only is it a positive thing for the less fortunate, it can be a fun and simple way to get involved and make a difference in someone else's life. After you've helped someone else or once you've made a positive change in someone's life, you feel good about it! I mean, not everyone cares about other people. Even if you don't give that much, you're still going out of your way to help the less fortunate. Just to be able to say you helped change someone's life or you kept one family from going hungry, you were still able to say you helped put forth an effort to stop poverty! Some local places already donating food and clothes are as follows: Salt and Light, Central Illinois Foodbank, Salvation Army and participating churches.

Reducing poverty can help make this world a better place. We won't have to worry about women prostituting, men pimping tricks, children going hungry or teens selling drugs! Poverty also can lead to gang violence. People will to to the extreme - even if it means taking away from another person or harming someone else! Think about making a difference and helping someone else for a change. STOP BEING SELFISH AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

Honorable Mentions:

Alec Shedelbower: "My community is Jefferson Middle School..."

Ashler Uebele: "If I could change one thing in my community it would be the discrimination against the LGBT crowd..."

2 comments



#1

Why are the honorable mentions from 2 years ago?

Elle

02/09/10 at 02:16



#2

We just put the honorable mentions on a random date in the past so that that post wouldn't end up on the front page along with the main article. Sorry for any confusion—they're all from this year.

Joel Gillespie

02/09/10 at 02:14