

Making their voice heard

By Darren Ridgley

Never before in history has society been more diverse, including among its members people from a wide array of cultural, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds. The question of how to accommodate all those varied peoples may be among the greatest challenges of our time.

The topic of inclusiveness was the focus of a special gathering hosted by the Interlake School Division (ISD) in collaboration with the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) titled "Generating Momentum for Our World: Student Voice Workshop."

The workshop, held Nov. 9 at Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre, saw Teulon, Stonewall and Warren Collegiates each send 24 students to attend, where they spent the day discussing topics relating to inclusiveness and how they might provide a more inclusive environment in their own schools.

"The purpose of the workshop is to encourage students to consider how some groups in their schools and society may be excluded, and how the students themselves can take action as young leaders to promote inclusion and acceptance," reads a press release about the workshop sent out by MCIC.

The workshop ran for much of the day, starting at around 9:30 a.m. and running until 2:30 p.m. During the day, students ran through three "circuit sessions" where they were divided into groups and ask to develop a presentation on how they might combat certain forms of exclusiveness or intolerance in their schools. Topics during the morning presentation included things like showing greater respect towards women in school and being sensitive about the use of terms relating to mental handicaps as insults, since those words can be deeply hurtful to those who actually live with such conditions.

Later on in the day, students had the opportunity to attend special workshops where they could work on creating certain forms of media, like video public service announcements.

Emily Simcoe, a Grade 11 student from Teulon Collegiate, is

involved with her schools Teens Against Drunk Driving (TADD) group, its yearbook and social committees and its Youth In Philanthropy group.

She told the Argus during the morning that she was enjoying the group discussion portion of the day, working with her peers "to see their input on how we can change things in our school."

One of her own goals is to get more students, and also more boys in general, involved in the student groups at her school, which she says are mostly female and usually consist of the same students over and over again.

"At my school, for the student leadership, it's mostly just girls, there's very few guys," Simcoe says.

"(Getting) more people, it just seems to be the same people over and over in every group."

She thinks she may try to solve that problem by advertising the groups more, visiting classrooms to talk to her peers about the work all the school's different groups are doing.

Christine Penner, assistant superintendent for the ISD, says the division's students have had similar opportunities in the past, taking part in other workshops where they've

"We do a high school student voice forum once a year," Penner says.

"We also have 'My Voice'... and that's a representation of middle years students... those students meet three times a year."

Penner says the workshops help to educate students and also provide them with the inspiration they may need to go forward and work toward improving life for their peers.

"I think what these conferences do is educates, empowers and engages them, and motivates them to go back to school and make a change."

As the ISD worked with MCIC to develop the workshop, they decided on its theme because working toward greater inclusiveness in schools is one of the ISD's goals.

"We talked about possible topics (with the MCIC), and inclusion, being one of our priorities, is very relevant to all of our students," Penner says.

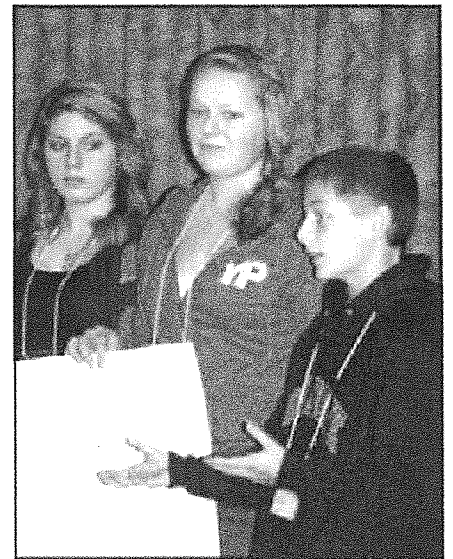


Photo by Darren Ridgley

(L-R) Kyra Lyle, Stacey Schott and Cole Janke.

Balmoral's second business showcase

By Amanda Lefley

The second-ever Balmoral Business Showcase will be taking place at the Community Hall Nov. 20 from 1-4 p.m.

"It's for small home-based businesses, just to showcase what they've got to offer," said Bev Wait, president of the hall board.

Wait said the Hall first tried the idea last year but unfortunately there was a large storm which effected the attendance at the event.

She further explained the idea for the Business Showcase, which has numerous local vendors in one location for community shoppers, came from the interest in how many vendors wanted to set up at Balmoral Days.

The Hall did a "trail run" of the event last year, to see how it would go over in the community.

said Wait. Despite the low attendance Wait said the businesses were pleased and interested in returning.

"We had a trial run last year. Unfortunately the weekend that it was on there was a storm so we didn't have as many people through the door as we'd hoped," explained Wait. "But most of the businesses were pleased with the interest in what they're providing."

Wait said the Business Showcase is a "shop early, shop in comfort" type of event, referring to holiday shopping. She explained many of the vendors have their new lines out for Christmas at this time of year and people are starting to do their holiday gift shopping. Wait also said the event is very relaxed and casual, the exact opposite of mall shopping during the holidays.

"A lot of them will have their new Christmas product line out and so we're sort of billing it as, shop early and shop in comfort," said Wait.

"It's a nice casual, relaxing day."

There is no entry fee for the event and Wait said there are vendors there selling everything from honey, to massages, Tupperware, to jewelry. She said there is something for everyone.

"There is pretty much something for everybody," said Wait. "There's everything from children's toys, like hobby horses and things like that, to whatever."

So far there are about 15 vendors signed up for the Business Showcase. The event will also have coffee, tea and cheese cake for sale and a brown bag auction will also be set up, said Wait.

For more information contact Wait at (204) 467-8821 or email waitkba@mymts.net.

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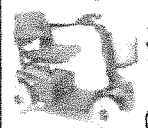
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