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SECTION EDITOR RUBEN CUETO, 954-574-5330, rcueto@tribune.com

Students learn valuable lessons

Holocaust survivors visit Hallandale High School for Student Awareness Day

By **Sergy Odiduro**
STAFF WRITER

The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center recently presented a Student Awareness Day at Hallandale High School.

The program offered 120 students the opportunity to hear directly from Holocaust survivors. At each table were a survivor, a group of students and a facilitator who aided the roundtable discussions.

At one table was Lucy Kalusin, who told students about how she and her sister narrowly escaped the concentration camps in Poland.

"We knew that if we stayed in the ghetto, we would be killed. The way

they treated people, it wasn't human," she said.

A neighbor from the Ukraine allowed them to hide in his house, where they lived undetected. "If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be alive today. He saved my life," she said.

Asked by student Jerry Mesidor whether she has ever returned to Poland, Kalusin shook her head no. "Too many sad memories," she said.

Anita Karl, another survivor, recounted how her mother and siblings escaped by claiming that they were Catholics. Her father wasn't so lucky. He was eventually discovered and killed by the Nazis.

A film describing the cruelty of

the Nazis and the conditions at concentration camps caused many of the survivors to walk out, unable to bear the images of suffering and despair.

"This is very personal to me," said Marilyn Santiago, a magnet coordinator for the school whose relatives were affected by the Holocaust. "I also had to walk out when the film was shown."

After a candle-lighting ceremony that allowed students to share what they learned, they were encouraged to sign a statement committing to combat violence and prejudice.

Leo Adler, a Holocaust survivor, asked them to remember what they

had heard during the program.

"We have people now that claim that this never happened," he said. "They are writing books about it, and that's what bothers me the most. They can't tell me that because I have lived it."

Hallandale Beach Mayor Joy Cooper said events like this help students learn valuable lessons so history doesn't repeat itself.

"I participated today because I wanted to show how important it is to listen to the survivors. Listening to what they have to say and to hear how they have suffered reminds us that we can never let this happen again," she said.

Rositta Kenigsberg, executive di-

rector of the Hollywood-based Holocaust center, said the lessons are especially timely.

"I still can't get over the fact that students are setting each other on fire, that they are kicking and beating each other over text messages. There is a total disrespect for human life," she said.

"The ultimate lesson of the Holocaust is that if you don't stand up to intolerance, it's going to lead to genocide. We have a right to live in freedom and democracy, and sometimes we take these things for granted."

For more information on the center, call 954-929-5690 or visit www.hdec.org.

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YOUNGSTERS SHOW TRUE CHARACTER



Photo by Janeris Marte

Piper High School student Brandon Griffin tracked down a man who left a bank card in an ATM. He was critically injured as he drove back to the bank, but he returned to school five months later and cheerfully encourages and helps others daily.

Students honored as part of school district's character education program

By **John W. Chace**
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Amanda Rose of Everglades High School in Miramar sloshed through muddy swamp water and smoke-filled air to help rescue a baby girl after her mother's car overturned along U.S. 27.

Brandon Griffin of Piper High in Sunrise tracked down the person who left a bank card in an ATM. He was critically injured as he drove back to the bank, but he returned to school five months later and cheerfully encourages and helps others daily.

Gabriel Horta of Sandpiper Elementary in Sunrise and Elizabeth Hyatt of Western High in Davie reach out to help students with autism. And cancer survivor Christa Barone of Pioneer Middle in Cooper City and Lakeside Elementary School's Alison Niyonsenga, who is battling cancer, tutor and inspire peers with upbeat attitudes and fortitude.

These six students and many others in Broward County public schools demonstrated outstanding character in various ways during the 2009-2010 school year. Broward students also assisted at schools, served in the local community, helped the homeless and elderly and touched people from other parts of the world, including Uganda and Haiti.

Thirty-one "top winners" will be honored in the 10th annual Sun Sentinel Kids of Character Year End Awards Ceremony Monday evening at Cooper City High School. They were selected from



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Honor roll

For the list of Kids of Character student and staff honorees, see **pages 8-9**.

nominees of the more than 160 schools that participated in the program this year. Nine school staff members also will receive character education awards.

A top student winner, Rose, 16, of Miramar, along with her brother, Matthew, 19, were called heroes by some who witnessed their response after the auto accident near Pembroke Pines on Thanksgiving Day. Amanda cared for the baby, Angeline, 4 months old then, after Matthew took her from the mother in the car, and then he aided the mother and her twins, 4 years old then.

"The mother was screaming and the baby wasn't crying," said Rose, a sophomore. "I was playing with her face and trying to get her to cry to see if she was OK. It felt like a lifetime. ... I was more scared of what was going to happen with them, and the baby started crying. It was a sense of relief, the most precious cry I have ever heard in my life. Then she quieted down."

When the ambulance came, she

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Safety plans

Hollywood planning public safety facility on the beach

By **Sergy Odiduro**
STAFF WRITER

Hollywood is in the preliminary stages of planning a public safety facility on the beach.

"At this point, we are negotiating with the county," said city spokeswoman Raelin Storey. "Our desire is to fund it through the [Hollywood Beach Community Redevelopment Agency] ... and in order to use the tax funds generated in the district for this purpose, we need to get the county's approval."

If negotiations are successful, Fire Station 40, currently at 2211 N. Ocean Drive, would move to the new location at 707 S. Ocean Drive once construction is complete.

Division Chief Gary Smith said the new location would be beneficial to area residents.

"This is a centralized location, and since the majority of our calls on the beach seem to be from the south side of Hollywood Boulevard, this will enhance our services by reducing the amount of time to respond to our calls," Smith said.

Initial plans call for a two-story facility featuring three apparatus bays, a full dormitory and kitchen, a training and fitness center,

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School has Rockin' Sockin' Science Fair

Youngsters show off their knowledge at Fort Lauderdale library, cultural center

By **Rebecca Dellagloria**
STAFF WRITER

A group of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds from Children in the Spirit Preparatory School in Pompano Beach recently participated in a pre-K science fair to showcase their scientific know-how.

The Rockin' Sockin' Science Fair, which took place at the African-American Research Library and

Cultural Center in Fort Lauderdale, was similar to science fairs at higher grade levels, said Dalia Tepper, the school's public relations director.

Presenting exhibits such as "What makes your heart beat fast?" and "Are you left- or right-sided?," students covered a number of areas, including chemical

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Staff photo by Kimberli DiMare

From left, Willie Struggles, 5, of Pompano Beach, Skylar Mustiva, 4, of Deerfield Beach, and Jayla Strickland, 5, of Pompano Beach, are amazed as they watch the evaporation of dry ice at the Rockin' Sockin' Science Fair hosted by the Children in the Spirit Preparatory School in Pompano Beach at the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center in Fort Lauderdale.

SNAPSHOTS

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and a parking garage with 44 spaces. A Dumpster enclosure, new sidewalks and landscaping, along with an environmentally friendly roof, also are planned.

Smith said the new facility will be more inclusive.

"The old facility is over 40 years old. It was a dormitory style, and in some places, we are using curtains [to separate men and women]," Smith said. "The new firehouse will be upgraded for [American with Disabilities Act] clients. We will also have individual bunkrooms and restrooms."

The now-vacant Southwinds Apartments is on the site, and the city is still determining how they will use it. The site was designated a historical site by the city, and Storey said efforts will be made to restore the historical integrity of the building while making it appropriate for current use.

"We may use [it] in a variety of ways," she said. "We don't know what the plan will be, but we will make provisions so that the building will not remain vacant."

The site also would be the new home for the fire department's beach safety division, which would move from its headquarters at 351 Michigan St. Its current location has administrative offices, as well as a range of specialized equipment dedicated for ocean rescue.

"We are actually going to incorporate beach safety with the fire department. We brought them in, and we will be sharing a gym and a training room," Smith said.

He said the facility will have one feature that's a bit of a throwback.

"We are going back in the firehouse tradition where we used to have a pole. This will be the only fire station in Hollywood that will have it," Smith said.

Not everyone will have to slide down, though.

"It won't be a requirement," Smith said. "There will be stairs available. It will be up to the person if they want to use it."

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handed the baby to an emergency medical technician, but Angeline started to cry. The EMT gave the baby back to her, and her crying stopped, she said, apparently feeling a bond with her.

"It made me feel good, like she knew I helped," said Rose, who has kept in weekly contact with the mother by phone and sometimes gets together in person with her and the family.

Griffin, 18, of Lauderdale, said it simply "was a good deed to do, the right thing to do" to pursue the man who had left his ATM card in the drive-through machine.

Griffin, a senior, had noted the car in line before him and took off after seeing the card. He caught up with the car a few blocks away and got him to pull over by yelling out the window and honking at him.

"There was no point in taking it or giving it back to the bank; the person would have worried about it," he said, adding that he did not expect the huge thanks he received and a \$20 reward.

And Griffin certainly had no idea his car would get struck and rammed into a pole as he headed back to the bank in Sunrise for his ATM transaction. He was in a coma for 21 days and slowly awoke over the next week, with little movement in his body and not being able to speak. Then he spent a month in full-time therapy.

He continued in intensive rehab for several weeks until returning to school Jan. 20. He still does therapy twice a week after school and is working hard to regain all of his speech, balance and use of the right side.

But through it all, he has encouraged others, starting with student visitors in the hospital and then others in rehab and struggling classmates.

"I help others; I motivate them," he said. "I show them I can do it. I persevered and tell them, 'You can do it, too.' I tell everybody I can."

His sister, Dericka, who sometimes helps him communicate, says he's in the National Achievers Society, part of the Urban League of Broward County, in which he mentors younger students.

"He wouldn't have made it

without God," she said. "He was the factor. All we could do was pray in belief."

New to Sandpiper this year, Gabriel, 8, a third-grader from Sunrise, has made a positive impact on students who surround him, assisting them with many needs. He particularly has befriended a student with autism, making "it an easier transition for him to be accepted in the class," said teacher Amy Mortman.

"The most special attribute that Gabriel encompasses is his tolerance for all students and his ability to see the positive traits that each child has," Mortman said. "He has such kindness in his heart and is always willing to help students and teachers. Gabriel has a special quality that brings joy into the lives of the people he touches."

Another top winner, Hyatt, 17, of Davie, serves as vice president of the Autistic Society of America Teen Board. The senior at Western High has started a scholarship program for kids with autism.

She also has launched an Internet safety presentation to explain the risks of social networking, and her latest project is working on a book proposal with a clinical psychologist to help students deal with cancer in their families.

Hyatt is doing the "personal story," along with Web design, having experienced the death of her mother in October and her father being diagnosed with cancer four years ago.

Alison, 8, a third-grader, "helps every student she meets," said Maria DeRose, a teacher at Lakeside Elementary in Pembroke Pines. "She is kind to everyone. She tutors other students and can always be seen with a book in her hand."

Alison, from Pembroke Pines, tutors several times a week, or whenever classmates need help, "because I just like to see the way they feel when they 'get' the things we're talking about. They usually say 'thank you, you're the best!'"

She said she is kind and upbeat despite her intense cancer treatments and being tired most days "because I don't like to see people be mean to others." She doesn't let others upset her, saying, "I usually count to 10 and don't



Submitted photo

Amanda Rose, of Everglades High School in Miramar, and her brother Matthew sloshed through muddy swamp water and smoke-filled air to help rescue a family after their car overturned along U.S. 27 near Pembroke Pines.

say anything mean back to them; what you say is who you are."

Barone, 14, another top winner, tutors as part of Pioneer Middle's peer counseling program. The eighth-grader from Hollywood is very sensitive to kids being bullied or teased. She also does peer mediation at Pioneer.

A 10-year cancer survivor, Barone serves cheerfully at

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, including participating on its Youth Advisory Council for two years, helping plan events for young hospital patients and providing input on the new Joe DiMaggio hospital being built.

"Never give up" is her and her family's motto.

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SECTION EDITOR RUBEN CUETO, 954-574-5330, rcueto@tribune.com

Cancer blog used to help others

Pembroke Pines woman shares her experiences as a young widow, single mom

By Chris Guanche
STAFF WRITER

Samantha Zullo's blog isn't like most others.

Every new entry she posts offers information about cancer, or chronicles her experiences being a widow and single mother at age 30. Blogging served as an outlet for her and husband Gary Zullo to help deal with the rare T-cell lymphoma he'd been diagnosed with.

"The blog was like therapy," said Zullo, of Pembroke Pines. "Gary could write how he felt."

Samantha Zullo said the diagnosis came as a shock — her husband was in his early 30s, exercised and ate right, yet he was afflicted with a

form of lymphoma normally found in people twice his age. The diagnosis came two days before the birth of their son, Michael.

Gary Zullo received chemotherapy treatment for his condition. That meant flying to Maryland and both of them being away from Michael. After several treatments, he returned to work as a software engineer and was taking Michael to day care in the morning. It all changed last Christmas, when he began to act delusional and was taken to the hospital with pneumonia and kidney failure. He died Jan. 1.

"It's completely unreal, like a really bad nightmare, and I'm still waiting for someone to wake me

up," she said.

But even after her husband's death, Samantha Zullo kept blogging. She recalls the frustration of looking for information or people to relate to. She would use the blog to help people in similar situations.

"I can't help my husband anymore, but I can help others," she said. "I know he would want me to do things to help others."

In addition to blogging, Zullo donates blood and helped with a fundraiser for Weston's Relay for Life cancer awareness event. The fundraiser started with a simple idea: 2-year-old Michael and his classmates at the Creative Child Learning Center in Sunrise decorated flags to sell at a silent auction.

"We wanted to do something for the family," said Sarah Braisted, the center's director. "When there's a loss like that, there's not much you can do to make someone feel better."

Children decorated the flags with handprints or drew fish and other animals on them. The flags were displayed at the Relay for Life's opening ceremony on April 24.

Because the effort was organized at the last minute, Zullo said she was expecting to raise about \$250. Between the auction and other donations, the effort netted about \$1,500.

"A lot of people are struggling with the economy, so to see dona-

tions coming in like that is incredible," Zullo said.

As for the blogging, Zullo doesn't intend to quit anytime soon. She said comments from strangers who can identify with being widowed or experiencing cancer have been helpful. Gary Zullo's blog remains online, and he'd intended to write a "witty book" about his experience with cancer. Samantha Zullo intends to write that book for him, using material from his blog.

"I want to take something that was very negative and put a positive spin to it," Zullo said. "Even if no one else reads it, it's for me."

For more information, visit www.samanthazullo.com.

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Green artwork

Pines students decorate grocery bags for Earth Day project

By Chris Guanche
STAFF WRITER

As part of Earth Day, shoppers at a Miramar Publix store had their groceries placed into paper bags decorated by Pembroke Pines students.

The Pembroke Pines Charter Elementary East campus participated in the 17th Annual Earth Day Groceries project. Twenty classes at the school decorated bags provided by the Publix at the nearby Miramar Commons shopping center, said Liz Mesa, the school's administrative coordinator. Mesa said one of the school's teachers, Lisa Dizenhoff, heard about the project and approached Publix with the idea.

"It's the first year we've done it," Mesa said. The project began in 1994 with an e-mail sent to several schools by Mark Ahlness, a third-grade teacher at Arbor Heights Elementary School in Seattle. Ahlness said he had heard about the idea in 1993 at a science workshop. He decided to try it with his own class, and the following year, he sent out an e-mail that netted responses from 43 schools in the U.S. and Canada.

"[Schools] get paper bags if they can, decorate and return them, and the store distributes them on Earth Day," Ahlness said.

The goal is to promote the use of paper bags because they can be more easily recycled. Ahlness has

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Earth Day celebration staged at local sanctuary. » 3



YOUNGSTERS SHOW TRUE CHARACTER



Staff photo by Janeris Marts

Piper High School student Brandon Griffin, third from left, tracked down a man who left a bank card in an ATM. He was critically injured as he drove back to the bank, but he returned to school five months later and cheerfully encourages and helps others daily. He's joined by fellow students, from left, David Brown, 18, of Lauderhill, Danielle Kelly, 18, of Sunrise, Kyra Ellis, 18, of Lauderhill, Tiffany Encarnacion, 18, of Sunrise, Julian Costa, 18, of Tamarac, and Felipe Ramis, 17, of Sunrise.

Students honored as part of school district's character education program

By John W. Chace
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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Honor roll

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Submitted photo

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