

MJCHF, Madison County Regional Superintendent and Madison County School Student Leaders held third “Conversation Towards a Brighter Future” summit

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EDWARDSVILLE — The Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation (MJCHF®), Madison County Regional Superintendent, and Madison County school

student leaders held the third “Conversation Towards a Brighter Future” summit on Fri., May 4. The summit began at 9:30 a.m. at the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities in Edwardsville.

“Conversation Towards a Brighter Future” (CTABF) is a youth driven program that is occurring as a solution to the negative discourse that is taking place across the country among our national leaders. Each Madison County school that is participating in the project identifies issues that affect its students and community, and then work to develop positive solutions to the issues. Each school is provided a \$5,000 scholarship to fund their projects. At the summit, student leaders presented a status report on their project, as well as shared their goals for the 2018-2019 school year.



“I was completely mesmerized by the wonderful work that these students are doing in their schools and communities throughout Madison County. They are facilitating meaningful discussions that are being heard and recognized on a national scale. The MJCHF is eager to witness the continuous success of our future young leaders in the next school year,” said Dr. Ed Hightower, Director of the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities.

There were 17 schools in attendance, including: Roxana High School, Trimpe Middle School, The Center for the Educational Opportunity in Troy, East Alton Middle School,

Collinsville Middle School, Collinsville High School, Edwardsville High School, Granite City High School, Madison Senior High School, Liberty Middle School, Lincoln Middle School, Triad Middle School, Triad High School, Venice Middle School, and Alton Middle School. Coolidge Middle School and Highland High School also attended as new members of the CTABF program.

Each group of student leaders gave a presentation of their efforts in the previous year, as well as their future plans for 2018-2019. While each school has successfully implemented a variety of projects and programs, there is a common theme amongst them—the four pillars of the MJCH—respect, dignity, understanding, and forgiveness. For example, Triad Middle School hosted a Mental Health Week to promote an understanding of mental health issues amongst its students. The CTABF clubs are not only implementing these four pillars into their schools, but also their communities. Lincoln Middle School students volunteered at the Metro East Humane Society, and made Valentine’s Day cards for local nursing homes and St. Louis Children’s Hospital. Coolidge Middle School raised \$1,400 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and has plans to start a “Getting to Know Granite” campaign next year, in which students will interview local business owners and high school graduates.



Other successful projects included Edwardsville High School’s improvement of school culture. At the beginning of the school year, 74 new students stated on average that felt a

5 out of a 10 on a scale of comfortability. By the end of the year, the school had successfully improved its environment, with the average of comfortability increasing to an 8.4. The students of the Center for Educational Opportunity (CEO) in Troy partnered with the University of Illinois Extension to improve their school's cafeteria and hallway by decorating it with bulletin boards and posters that reminded students of the four pillars. Next year, they have plans to create a lounge in partnership with J.F. Electric, so that students that have demonstrated the four pillars can be rewarded with time to relax in the lounge.

Dr. Robert Daiber, Regional Superintendent of Madison County schools, spoke to the students about the positive impact that their projects are making. "Your outstanding work is making a big difference in the lives of your fellow students and it's making a difference in your school culture, and that is what our main vision of "Conversation Towards a Brighter Future is all about," said Daiber.

The MJCH and Lewis and Clark Community College have partnered with Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's IRIS Center and the Madison County Regional Superintendent to bring "CTABF" to life. The participating schools received the next \$1,000 of their funding, so they can continue to carry out their CTABF projects in the next school year. To learn more about the program and to stay up to date on participating schools' projects, please visit: <http://www.mjchf.org/page/brighter-future-new/>.