

From Hate To Hope

Leadership program bridges the divide between students and law enforcement.

Jackie Headpohl | Managing Editor

Twenty students at Roseville High School have a new perspective on local law enforcement thanks to the Tectonic Leadership Program. The pilot program was started by Brenda Rosenberg, author of *Harnessing the Power of Tension*, and organized by Assistant Principal Monica Gabriel.

The word “tectonic” refers to the tension of Earth’s tectonic plates. The program aimed to diffuse the tension between law enforcement and communities of color.

“My hope was that the program would create a dialogue that really needs to happen,” Gabriel said. “If we only get our information from the media, we are bound for continuous issues and a culture of fear and hate.”

“If both the community and law enforcement can be open and honest about their fears and concerns, we will get a lot more done and live in a safer community,” she added.

The Roseville High School students went on a tour of the police department and met with police and FBI officers who provided perspective on what it’s like to be a police officer and the threats they face each day.

Students had the opportunity to participate in texting and driving and drunk-driving simulators as well as a “shoot-don’t shoot” simulator.

“After today, I got an actual feeling of what the police really go through in these crazy, scary situations,” said one student.

“I had to decide in a moment what to do. It was an amazing experience to see exactly what the police go through in a deadly situation,” said another.

Tension between the students and police officers was very real at the start of the 10-week program. “Don’t see me as just a uniform. I would give my life for you,” said a police officer.

A student said, “Don’t see me as a threat or a target, just a human.”

During the program, students learned how to conduct themselves at traffic stops, how to help a friend in danger of becoming a victim of sex trafficking, how to deal with bullying and threats on social media, how to deal with abuse at home, drug use or self-harm and dis-



Brenda Rosenberg listens as Abbeygail Omais of Dearborn talks about her experience in the program.



Roseville High student Gino Reinke, 15, serves desserts to Roseville Police Detective Brad McKenzie and Roseville High senior Tommy Schneider, 17.

crimination. Students created a website to share what they learned with the rest of the school.

At the culminating dinner on March 15, each student had to present a “justice project,” an expression of what justice meant to them. One student created a rap song, others made paintings or produced videos or wrote poems.

“Many of the students’ projects left me in tears,” said Rosenberg, who is creating a documentary on the program and hopes to spread it to other local

schools. “The students now see the police as human — not just uniforms.”

Miriam Logan, a student in the program, said the program “changed her life. I really wasn’t sure how to talk to people without getting defensive and tensing up. Now I can understand how to listen to someone and try to understand their point of view.” *

For information on bringing the Tectonic Leadership Program to your school, contact Brenda Rosenberg at pathways2peace@comcast.net.



Detective Brad McKenzie supervises the driving-while-drunk simulation.



Bushra Alawie, community outreach specialist at the FBI’s Office of Public Affairs, has students try on protective gear.



Roseville High School’s Tectonic leaders



Violetta Nicovic explains her justice project.