

Ansonia High alum returns to advise Human Relations Club

ANSONIA - Ansonia High School graduate Danielle Todd has returned to her roots.

Todd, a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Hartford, has come full circle. She is now the lead advisor of the Human Relations Club.

The club's mission is to educate students and the community about diversity and the harmful effects of discrimination and prejudice. 'It empowers students to become leaders,' she said. Todd was a member of the Club when she was in high school.

"My involvement in HRC grew throughout high school and really helped shaped my interests in college, from tutoring people who were incarcerated, to my desire to become a psychologist," she said. "I look forward to being able to challenge and support students as they grow into the leaders that they are capable of becoming."

"Today issues such as bullying are prevalent and pervasive in society. I am happy to return to the Club in a different capacity" as a mentor and adviser to students.

Todd recently attended a training program with Ansonia and Derby middle schools to plan educational, cultural, and intergenerational activities.

The program teamed up high school and middle school club members who were trained to open discussions about bullying, social media, and self-identity

There are HRC clubs in Ansonia and Derby schools, with about 100 students involved. The advisors are Sue Nargi (AHS), Jim Piazza (DHS) and Cindy Mullins, Vicki Baldwin, Chris Quinlan, and Devin Arpaia from AMS.

Mullins said the program was well received. "I have had students comment that they were able to reflect and think about bullying and racism in our school - and to relate to how it feels to be bullied. We discussed how we may move forward and learn to treat each other equally. It was really a job well done for all involved."

Piazza also said he received positive feedback from middle school teachers, who said the students really enjoyed learning from their older counterparts.

"Our students relished the opportunity to work with the middle school to tighten bonds between the schools and teach them the importance of anti-bullying efforts," he said.

DHS Principal Marty Pascale spoke about the support and encouragement that DHS club members received. "We are very excited that the Human Relations Club is working with the students. The relationships being developed with our students have been fantastic."

Todd took the helm of the HRC in November. She will meet with advisors and student officers to schedule and discuss other activities.

In the past, conferences have been held; cultural celebrations; a Senior Prom with senior citizens and guest speakers for club members. Todd has experience in all of these activities – both as a club member and president.

"I was interested in taking on this role because of the passion I have for the work that HRC does, and also because of the opportunity to give back to an organization that gave so much to me," she said.

Todd said the late Nick Collicelli, who brought the HRC to Ansonia in 2007, made a life-long impression on her. "The HRC and Mr. C. were extremely instrumental in shaping my adolescent years and gave me a chance to overcome a lot of my own insecurities and self-doubt."



Danielle Todd (center) speaks with two seventh graders at Ansonia Middle School during a recent anti-bullying education program.

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After Collicelli passed away in 2016, his family established the Nicholas Collicelli Legacy Fund with the Valley Community Foundation.

The fund supports programs and individuals that best exemplify Nick's passion for bringing people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate our common good.

Todd said "I want to be able to keep Mr. C's legacy alive by being a small part of the very important and meaningful work that he has done for our students and community."

Ansonia Superintendent Dr. Joseph DiBacco said he is well aware of the work accomplished by the HRC and he is grateful to the Katharine Matthies Foundation, Valley Community Foundation, and Graustein Memorial Fund for their support of the club.

"We are fortunate to have such a passionate individual as Ms. Todd to lead the HRC. She will continue the original mission of the Club and will bring heart and soul to their commitment."

This is a press release from Ansonia Public Schools.



Students from the HRC Clubs in Ansonia and Derby teamed up for a day of training at the Boys & Girls Club in Ansonia.

Lions Club recognizes Seymour students' poster art

SEYMOUR – Seymour Middle School seventh grader Michael Azzarone recently won a local Lions International Peace Poster Contest.

First, second, and third runners-up were Chloe Pernaselci, Gianna Moramaco, and Jenna Smith respectively.

Azzarone's poster was among more than 450,000 entries submitted worldwide in the contest. Lions is sponsoring the program to emphasize the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

"Peace is the freedom and the love in the world that we share," Azzarone said.

The poster was selected by a panel of judges for its originality, artistic merit, and portrayal of the contest theme, *Journey of Peace*. Judging was held Nov. 11 at Seymour Middle School.

Seymour Lions Club President Jovanii Ortiz said she was impressed by the artistic expression and creativity of the Seymour Middle School Arts students.

"It is obvious that these young people have strong ideas about what peace means to them, she said. "I'm proud we provided them the opportunity to share their visions."

"Azzarone's poster will advance through the district, multiple district and international levels of competition to be declared the grand prize winner," Ortiz said.

One international grand prize winner and 23 merit award winners will be selected. The grand prize includes a cash award of \$5,000, plus a trip for the winner and two family members to a special award ceremony. The 23 merit award winners will each receive a certificate and an award of \$500.

"Our club is cheering for Michael and we hope that his vision will ultimately be shared with others around the world," Ortiz said.

View past international grand prize winners at www.lionsclubs.org.



L-R: Asst. Principal Kathleen Freimuth; Visual Arts Teacher Amanda Dingle, Michael Azzarone, Chloe Pernaselci, Gianna Moramarco, Jenna Smith, Seymour Lions: Melissa A. Smith and Bettyann Peck, Principal Jodi Rode



Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization with more than 1.35 million members in 208 countries and areas around the world.

Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired and made a strong commitment to community service and serving youth throughout the world.

