

The Power of One

Lou Pear - Unified Sports Director

At the recent Unified Sports Youth Leadership Summit Assistant Director of the CAS/SOCT Unified Sports Program, George Synnott suggested that each attendee take back to their school ONE Project Unify initiative to help enhance their school's positive learning plan. Julian Colquitt, President and CEO of the Henkel Corporation and program sponsor, reinforced this message as the power of one also has an important impact on the corporate world. Both conference speakers challenged the attendees to be leaders in their schools, commended them for their interest and praised their enthusiasm.

This year's keynote speaker was Harvey Alston, a former football coach, teacher and a university dean. His motivational presentation got the summit off to an energetic and enthusiastic start. His message also focused on how school aged students can make a difference in their schools. He reminded them that as with the tin man in the Wizard of Oz, all they needed was heart and a dose of happiness.

Following Harvey's charge to make each school a better place for all students there were seven breakout sessions which covered topics including "R – Word Campaigns, Movies the Move, Leadership Skills and Unified Art. The " R-Word and Movies that Move sessions were led by the Unified Sports Youth Activation Council, athletes and partners from Avon, Farmington, Guilford, Lewis Mills and Rocky Hill High Schools. The Youth Activation Council is directed by Karol Brzozowski. Under the direction of Dan Lee, teacher and coach from Cheshire High School and Mark Dube, teacher at Fermi High School, students from their respective schools demonstrated the skills needed to be a successful leader. Rounding out these presentations was the Unified Art's hands on demonstration highlighting the attributes of social inclusion and acceptance. This presentation was led by Barbara Horn and Marney Pollack.

David Steffan was the luncheon speaker and Loretta Claiborne was our guest speaker. Both are Special Olympians who have overcome great physical and intellectual obstacles. Their presentations were inspirational and motivating.

Now that this conference has concluded and students and coaches have returned to their respective schools, have these powerful messages inspired them to put words into action plans? I am pleased to report that we now have fifteen new schools holding "R-Word Campaigns. They are Avon, Bacon Academy, Bassick, Berlin, Enfield, Guilford, Haddam – Killingworth, Lewis Mills, Norwich Free Academy, Sheehan, Stafford and Stonington High

Schools. Also embracing the “R-Word” initiative are Broadview, Har-Bur and Woodrow Wilson Middle Schools. There are four new schools about to embark on a Unified Art Program. They are Farmington, Hall, Haddam – Killingworth and Wilton High Schools. We have also been told that many of our varsity basketball teams are hosting Unified Sports halftime games and Unified Sports teams are playing interscholastic games with neighboring schools. In addition to these great action plans New Britain High School’s Unified Sports Team is partnering with Saint Joseph’s College for basketball clinics, a halftime game at the college and a social gathering with each other. The Central Connecticut Conference has established a 19 game interscholastic schedule with a culminating tournament to be held in Windsor on March 2, 2012. The schools included in this schedule are East Hartford, Newington, Norwich Free Academy, South Windsor and Windsor.

All of this is great news and gives the CAS staff a renewed spirit as we prepare for the March Basketball Tournament Marathon. A special thank you goes out to all of our coaches, athletic directors, athletes and partners. Through your leadership each of you have shown one person can make a difference in our schools and in the lives of those around you. You are all to be commended on jobs well done. Keep up the great work.