



# QuEd up for Education

*People and programs impacting our QCSD community*

## QCHS Spirit Council leads effort to increase tolerance

By Gary Weckselblatt

A group of Quakertown Community High School students is working to turn a negative situation into a positive one.

Members of the QCHS Spirit Council recently traveled to Cheltenham High School to meet with their cheerleaders who were the object of racial taunts during the Oct. 6 football game at Alumni Field.

"I told them I'm really sorry from the bottom of my heart," said Dalton Glova, a senior. "This is a real issue and it has to be handled somehow, somehow. We want our Quakertown community to make people feel welcome. We care about our rep. We have to take pride and fix it."

Diana Kahindo, a junior, said that the group "knew that the problem was out there" and "we had to fix it moving forward."

Spirit Council's was not the first apology offered to Cheltenham by the school community.

Superintendent Dr. Bill Harner, Assistant Superintendent Lisa Hoffman and Pastor Dave Kratz of East Swamp Church each traveled to Cheltenham High School in the days following the incident to express their sorrow and hear from students, parents and their Cheltenham counterparts.

Student leaders from Strayer sent a video to Cheltenham as a way to apologize and show the district's true character.

The QCSD School Board and administration went even further, signing up for a system-wide diversity and inclusion initiative with the Pearl S. Buck Foundation. As part of the program, the Bucks County-based foundation will assess 400 employees as part of "The Welcome Workplace" program, in which professional trainers and staff



Some of the Spirit Council members who spoke with Cheltenham students include, from right, Jarrod Clarke, Madison Smith, Suzie Njunge, Diana Kahindo, Dalton Glova and teacher Juan Soto.

will work with district leadership and stakeholders to build individual and group intercultural competency.

The District is also teaming up with the Peace Center for its "Celebrating Me, Celebrating You" program. Focusing on fourth graders, it's designed to build emotional self-awareness, classroom community, and empathy among students while introducing concepts of tolerance, diversity, and practice with tools to intervene in bullying behavior.

Spirit Council also plans to make an impact. Students said they didn't travel to Cheltenham simply to apologize. They want to help make the future better with forward-thinking ideas.

"It was nice to get their perspective, to think of solutions to make this better and not just apologize," said sophomore Madyson Longenbaugh.

Madison Smith, a junior, said "We need to now come together as school community, too, and reach out to younger kids. They look up to older kids. We're going to take this incident and change everything for the better."

One action Spirit Council has taken is

a "Poster Positive Project," according to junior Jarrod Clarke. It includes "kind-hearted notes" place on a large wall that allows students to see that "you are welcome here. We want you here," he said.

Perhaps even more critical is students will have a safe space where they can have a confidential conversation with a teacher, said Suzie Njunge, a junior. A symbol will be designed and placed on a teacher's door to let students know you can have a frank conversation with that educator.

"This incident was the trigger here," Juan Soto, a world language teacher and Spirit Council advisor, said of the racial taunting. "Now we have to do something. We can improve, we can get better. We must give every teacher the tools they need so they can feel empowered and talk about this problem in the classroom."

Gary Weckselblatt, director of communications, writes about the people and the programs that impact the Quakertown Community School District. He can be reached at 215-529-2028 or [gweckselblatt@qcsc.org](mailto:gweckselblatt@qcsc.org).