

## COVENTRY HIGH MINIMIZING DIFFERENCES

# Buddy System works at CHS



Coventry High students at a Best Buddies event at the Omni hotel in Providence: front row: (left-right) Bridget Cronin, Gregory Washington, and Nina Casacalenda. Back row: Abigail Magiera, Jason Hoskins, McKenzie Haynes, Katie Beadoin, and David Almeida. The program brings together students with and without special needs.

## Oakers help bring student body together

ANITA E. BAFFONI  
abaffoni@ricentral.com

COVENTRY— The worldwide Best Buddies program invited students at Coventry High School gathered on Friday morning for an assembly to learn more about the benefits of participating and how it can positively affect those students with special needs. The program is aimed to pair students with and without special needs for one-to-one friendships to help break the social barriers and learn to be accepting to everyone.

Coventry is one of a handful of high schools in the state to participate in the program.

Inspirational videos were shown, one of Cole Campbell, a Coventry High School (CHS) student who suffers from a rare brain disease and made national headlines when he played in a varsity basketball game and made four three-pointers and helped lead the Oakers to victory last winter against Cranston High School West.

“The whole theme of the assembly was on acceptance, respect and

See OAKERS, Page A-3

# Oakers involved with Best Buddies program

*Continued from Page A-1*

unity,” said Brooke Macomber, a CHS assistant principal. “The paired students have a lot of contact inside and outside of school and some relationships even move into weekends and vacation weeks.”

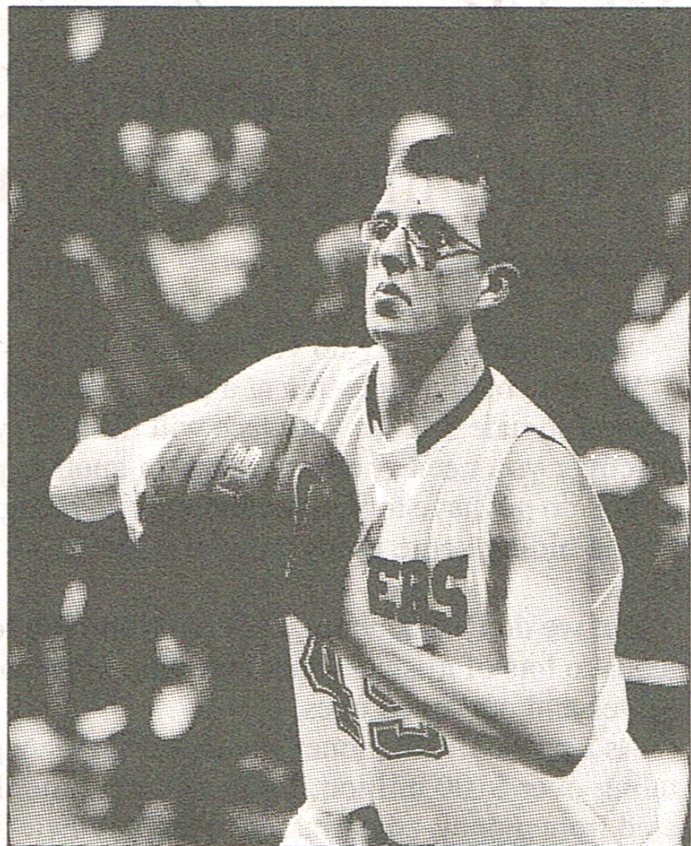
There were mostly freshman students that attended the assembly. They were taught how to get involved with the Best Buddies program and met some other students who are already participating in it.

Unified Sports is a program run by the Special Olympics and is another way that CHS focuses on inclusion and open mindedness with students who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. It gives an opportunity for students with and without disabilities to pair up and through sports-related activities and teach social and behavioral skills to help promote a unified school community. Macomber said she hopes to have volleyball added as a unified sport in the fall.

Some of the paired students spoke in front of the crowd and talked about their positive experience with the friendships they have fostered. Macomber said that some students spoke about their teachers and the support they have gotten from them.

President of the Best Buddies Coventry Chapter, Jason Hoskins, did a lot of the speaking, Macomber said, and has a lot of experience with the program from his years at CHS. He has helped organize efforts, one called “Spread the word, end the word” to help end the use of derogatory terms towards individuals with disabilities.

Part of the assembly was to educate the students on how specific words are offensive to



risportsphoto.com file

**Cole Campbell, son of Coventry High basketball coach Tom Campbell, made four three-pointers in a game against Cranston West last winter and was the subject of an inspirational video.**

people and how to end the use of them.

Recently, students involved in Best Buddies were invited to a conference at the Omni Providence Hotel to meet with other students throughout the state who participate in the program all under the Rhode Island Chapter.

Other high schools in the state that have the Best Buddies program include North Kingstown High School, East Greenwich High Schools, La Salle Academy and Warwick Veterans.