

Feinstein club lets girls be themselves

School helps teens tackle tough issues at middle school

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COVENTRY — “Her Turn,” a girls’ club at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School that meets periodically, tackles tough issues in a comfortable, safe atmosphere where teens are surrounded by their friends.

Guidance department heads Lori Lebrun and Jenn Donnelly Taylor head the club and said it’s a great way for girls to be able to express themselves and it all started a few months back when singer/songwriter and former bass player for “Phone Calls from Home” David Place offered his words for friendship, being true to yourself and anti-bullying to the students at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School during presentations held over the winter.

“I like it, I think it’s a great idea,” said seventh-grader Morgan Maher. “It’s a safe place to talk about a lot of different issues.”

“I used to be afraid to try new things but since I’ve joined, that’s changed,” said sixth-grader Sophia O’Donnell. “This is where I met my best friend Emma.”

Emma Lassahn, also in sixth grade, said she’s very comfortable sharing with the group of girls.

Lebrun and Taylor love working together on other programs and projects so for both of them to be involved and have the teens come to share and be a source for each other, is a very comfortable and natural thing for them.

“We talk about fitting in and sometimes why it’s hard to fit in and why

Club at Feinstein helps girls get by tough times

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social media plays a role in that as well and how to deal with those issues," Taylor said.

Place shared his knowledge of how each student can be their best by how they handle relationships, stress and the influences in their lives when he visited over the winter.

"This is for the kid who isn't the best in academics or who might not have the perfect home life," he said. "Last time we talked about challenging yourself and taking risks. This time it's about influences and how to turn the negative around."

Some of the examples of stress the sixth-graders offered were homework, arguing with siblings and parents and peer pressure from friends.



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A bulletin board at Feinstein Middle School used by the Her Turn club.

"You have teachers, coaches, parents, siblings and family who all have an influence on you and they all set the stage," he said. "All of those people have an influence on you and set the stage for your life and give you your basis so when you grow up, whether you like it or not, your family is your biggest influence."

"The more stuff you go through, the more you can be empathetic with others," Place said, "because you'll know exactly what they're going through. My dad used to say 'Don't ever say something bad about someone because if it's the truth, someone else will let them know. Why be the bad guy?' and treat everyone the same no matter who they are."

Lebrun has shared the story of the elephant in chains to fit in with Place's presentation a few months ago.

"We talked more about a fixed mindset and growth mindset," she said. "I told them about the story of the elephant in chains. The elephant grew up with a chain around his ankle, never realizing he could break free because that's what he always knew and thought he couldn't break free."

Taylor explained that while some students enjoy after-school sports, others enjoy band or another activity.

"To join this club, you can just come and be yourself," she said.

Place visited the club and helped them write a song about having strength and a growth mindset and how they can achieve whatever they set their minds to.

"You can kind of let it go here," he said. "This is a great way to communicate and a place to come just to talk and try to figure things out with no pressure."