

# NAACP head schools FMS students

## Chair of Providence chapter Pilar McCloud opens eyes in presentation



Kendra Leigh Miller • Daily Times

**Chairwoman of the NAACP's Providence Chapter Pilar McCloud spoke to students at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School about diversity.**

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COVENTRY — Chairwoman of the NAACP's Providence Chapter, Pilar McCloud opened students' eyes at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School Tuesday when she spoke about diversity.

"My goal is to broaden the minds of youth in general that education is important and valuable, to take it seriously and to make an impact on young ladies and their role in society is just as significant as a mans and to the men; I want the men to know they must respect the women in their lives," McCloud said.

As a mother of two, McCloud

lived in Bronx, New York before moving to Rhode Island.

When she arrived in the Ocean State, she quickly learned that everyone wanted to be a mix of something.

"No one wanted to be identified as a 'color' and Black History month wasn't something widely taught, if taught at all, at least not in my daughter's school," she said. "People were very naive."

McCloud is a teacher in Providence and works for the NAACP in the youth, college and high school division, where she travels and shares her very real message to teens

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# Students at FMS schooled

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about what their lives are like compared to others who may not have the same opportunities.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization.

"It has more than half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world, who are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, campaigning for equal opportunity and conducting voter mobilization," she explained. "We are Rosa Parks, we are civil rights, we are everywhere with a branch in every state, we are the most feared and the most revered. We aren't just for people of color, we do not discriminate."

McCloud went on to explain why.

"We believe everyone, everywhere, should be treated equally," she said. "Do you think your education here at this middle school is the same as the education in a Providence school?" she asked. "Your library here is open, large and spacious. Children of color are more likely to have detention or be expelled or sit in their library for punishment, which is smaller and crowded. How can a student learn or take tests or pass tests when they're not in the classroom? — which has double the students."

McCloud said one the things the organization fights for is less crowded classrooms, as well as voting rights for all and equal pay for women.

"The little bubble that you live in is going to pop one day and make you see what's out in the world," she said. "I hate to be picked on and I

hate to see others being picked on."

She encouraged students to go volunteer in a soup kitchen or take a trip to another state to see how things are outside of what they know.

"I walked with my students from Richmond, Va. to Washington, D.C., 127 miles, 23 to 25 miles per day, in five days to an event there," she said, "because your role does matter and it was important to me to have my students participate and get involved with the process," she said.

Sue Squillanti, middle school teacher, said it was wonderful for the students to know they have a voice.

She and Judith Almy-Coutu, along with teachers on the Galaxy Team, began working last summer on developing a year-long curriculum called "Building Bridges."

The curriculum provides students with weekly advisory lessons, videos, and guest speakers who will help them explore their place in society, the value of diversity, the harmful effects of prejudice and the role of government plays in creating fair and respectful communities.

The primary goals are that students expand their sense of responsibility and understanding that their beliefs, actions, and behaviors impact our society.

Teachers also want students to come away with a sense that each of them has a personal responsibility to improve the well-being of others and society as a whole.

Students on the Galaxy Team will complete the "Building Bridges" unit of study by participating in a meaningful community service project.