

Students align to spread message of hope

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COVENTRY — The students at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry may not have actually had to say anything, but their message was clear.

They are hoping to spread a message of hope.

A select group of students from the school assembled outside the school last month to express their message. They were aligned into the letters “H,” “O,” “P,” and “E” by a school administrator who stood on top of the school building. It was their way of communicating a message from the American Cancer Society.

People of all ages from every town in the state were invited to participate in the American Cancer Society’s fight against cancer. Each year in June the society organizes an event known as the Relay for Life where groups of people come together and walk for 18 hours straight to raise money for the fight against cancer.

Prior to the event, teams of participants and others — some who are and some who are not going to be involved in the relay — try to motivate their communities by spreading this message of hope. Megan Evangelista, community executive of development for the American Cancer Society, said that “many towns came up with different ways of showing us their hope, but none had done anything quite like this.”

Evangelista said some towns did Christmas displays with purple lights, some created displays in store window fronts and others did drawings, but none, she said, had done anything like the students at the Coventry Middle School had.

Lynne Peters, the Event Chair for the Relay for Life of Coventry, said the students came up with the idea for creating the message. She said she was very excited about helping the students to organize it because she is always looking to get more youth involved with the relay and the society’s mission.

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Photo Courtesy of Kevin Dolan/Lifetouch

Coventry middle school students line up to spell out the word 'hope' to help spread a message on behalf of the American Cancer Society in the days leading up to the group's Relay for Life.

Students hope message motivates

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This year, she said, she was quite impressed with the motivation at the school level. In addition to creating the hope message, which brought together close to 40 teachers and students from the school, the students at the school also organized a hat day. For the hat day event, the students donated a \$1 to wear a hat for the day with all of the proceeds going towards the American Cancer Society.

On another day, they organized a spirit day, and invited all students who wanted to support the cause to wear purple and donate \$1 to the cause. Between the two events, Peters said the school raised an additional \$500 for the American Cancer Society, which she said is "awesome for a middle school."

According to Peters, many of the students from the school who have participated in the various school-sponsored events are planning to

participate in the upcoming relay. She said teams are still being formed and she encourages all those interested to join.

This year the Relay for Life is scheduled for June 12 and 13th and will take place at Coventry High School. Families, clubs, corporations and churches have all been known to form teams, Peters said, but any group of people are welcome to participate. She said that teams are usually made up of eight to 15 people and a fee of \$10 is asked per person to participate.

To learn more about the event or about forming a team, either call 243-2624 or visit the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life Web site, www.relayforlife.org/coventryri.

All of the money raised from the relay is put into the American Cancer Society's general fund which helps to provide services and support to cancer patients, survivors and caregivers, as well as fund innovative cancer research.