



Rachael Stamp • Daily Times

Students listen a speaker at the Youth Crime Watch convention held at the Community College of Rhode Island, Warwick.

Students work to S.A.V.E. schools

RACHAEL STAMP
Special to the Times

COVENTRY — About 70 students from the middle and high school attended the Youth Crime Watch convention at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) on Thursday and Friday.

Students filled the auditorium where they were trained to become leaders to help to stop acts of vandalism and bullying at schools.

This is Coventry's fourth year of involvement said Charles Blanchette, program coordinator for Students Against Vandalism Everywhere (S.A.V.E.) in Coventry public schools.

"These are awesome kids in our school," he said. "There is an impression that most

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Emily Gamage
ASFMS student

youth are a bunch of hooligans, but these students here prove that wrong."

Blanchette said Youth Crime Watch is a national program run in the public schools designed to stop the spread of negative aspects of schools, such as vandalism and bullying.

Emily Shell Gamage, the recognized 2009 national School Youth of the Year from Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, said she loves being involved with this.

"We have a belief that we can make a difference," said Gamage. "We've moved mountains already in the middle school. Everyone knows about S.A.V.E. and they know that it's a presence that is safe because everyone is looking out for you."

Gamage is now a freshman in high school and plans on continuing the program.

Blanchette said this program gives students the opportunity to report on vandalism and bullying in schools. He said people can report on crimes that they have seen in schools, contacting the correct administrator to remove and eliminate the problems.

He said the students in Coventry have done an exceptional job of promoting and integrating this program into the schools.

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School group praised by faculty

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"These are the fine kids who represent the leaders in their schools," said Blanchette.

He said the convention in CCRI was a great way for the youth throughout Rhode Island to come together to share good ideas to help to promote positive vibes throughout all schools.

Karlene Toppin, a resident of Coventry and teacher in Foster, said this program builds a sense

of community in schools and that this conference builds a sense of community throughout the state.

"It's been really powerful," she said. "I've just started this program where I'm teaching and this conference is a great opportunity to see what other kids are doing."

Blanchette said this program helps students in so many ways.

"It gives these kids the ability to gain leadership roles," he said. "Some might have been

nervous when they started this program, but they really come forward as they work.

Coventry school resource officer, David Fraatz said he is very impressed with the program.

"I see that the students are motivated about trying to make a difference," he said. "They help each other to stay positive and are acting in positive ways themselves. They volunteer with community projects and are really involved."