

Special guests join Washington Oak for PBIS assembly



Angelena Chapman/Daily Times

(l-r) Local singer Lisa Lachance, NAACP-Providence President James Vincent, music teacher Scarlett St. Martin and Principal Dr. Donna Raptakis after the recent PBIS assembly held at Washington Oak Elementary School in Coventry.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks honored

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COVENTRY—How to be responsible, respectable and safe are three things students got help in learning at a recent school-wide assembly.

Washington Oak Elementary School holds a kick-off event each school year for their Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports or PBIS program.

Music teacher Scarlett St. Martin said that while it has been a great year, sometimes in the spring it needs to be reiterated what's expected of students as far as behavior.

They decided to hold this event before that happens and hopefully be better off.

St. Martin worked with the students on the songs for the assembly.

She is also on the PBIS committee and when they talked about the little lessons the kids would review she asked if she could share some of it through music and make that connection.

The assembly took place on the morning of Wednesday,

March 31.

Students Myles and Maxwell Marino welcomed the rest of the school to the PBIS assembly. They extended a special welcome to their two guests, NAACP-Providence President James Vincent and local singer Lisa Lachance.

"You have all reviewed the Responsible, Respectful and Safe behaviors that are expected here at Washington Oak in the classroom, in the hallways, in the bathrooms and on the bus," the Marino's told the school.

The event was recognizing and inspired by two historical figures and the songs and the speeches were connected to those figures.

"Today we are celebrating two people from our American history, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks," the students said.

"Their lives were examples of being responsible, respectful and safe even when the right choices were difficult ones to make," the Marino's said.

Except for the preschool, kindergarten and fifth grade, all other grades shared a song.

First grade opened up the assembly with the song "Martin Luther King" by Merle Gartrell. It was introduced by students Emily Heath and Westin Palumbo.

St. Martin said that she had explained to each grade individually how their song was connected to the PBIS program. The introductions were so that the students in the other grades could understand the connection.

Heath and Palumbo told their fellow students, "It tells about his dream that all people should be free."

The next song was "Free at Last" an African American Spiritual.

It was performed by the second grade and introduced by Kianna Hepburn and Austin Moore.

Hepburn and Moore told the school before their grade sang the song, "Martin Luther King Jr. knew this song and included part of it in one of his most famous speeches. See if you recognize the words from his speech."

"Free at Last" was the song that their guest singer, Lachance, was a part of.

"She will be singing the call, which is the solo part in this song," the students said.

St. Martin said that there was a part in the song for a soloist with a huge voice and while it would have been nice with the kids, they invited Lachance to

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do the solo and sing with the kids.

Lachance lives in Coventry and her son, Joseph, actually attended Washington Oak. He is now at the middle school, St. Martin said.

"She is a teacher and enjoys singing solos and with a choir," Hepburn and Moore said in her introduction before the song.

The third grade's song was introduced by students Lorenzo Zenfrilli and James Bennett. They sang "Back of the Bus," adapted by Miss Mary Jane Pige.

Zenfrilli and Bennett told the school that the song was about Rosa Parks and that "Rosa Parks was very brave to stay in her seat and insist that she had the right to be treated respectfully on the public bus just like her white neighbors."

After the third grade's song Vincent spoke to the students.

Vincent is the new president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)-Providence Branch. He was sworn in this January to replace Clifford Montiero, the long-time president.

The school had tried to contact Montiero, but heard back instead from Vincent who told them he was the new president and that he would love to come to speak at the school.

The NAACP is non-profit founded in 1909 in New York City.

The mission of the NAACP-Providence is "to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate

racial hatred and racial discrimination."

Both King and his father and Parks were involved with the NAACP.

St. Martin said that Vincent told her he was a junior in high school when King was shot and killed in 1968.

St. Martin said that Vincent talked about how doors were opened for him as a teenager from inner-city Boston.

Vincent attended Dartmouth College and earned his bachelor's degree in Government and also has his Masters in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

"He did a nice job talking to the kids on their level," St. Martin said.

St. Martin said that he told the Washington Oak students that whether they had glasses or not or no matter the color of their shirt or the color of their skin they all have wonderful things to offer."

St. Martin said that was really what the whole event was about to "be respectful of all those people at our school."

Michael Ducally and Victoria Henneman introduced the song for the fourth graders.

"As we finish up the last two groups on the program, we would like you to think about how your behavior impacts other students each day," they said, "Sometimes it is hard to make the right behavior choice when your friends are trying to do something wrong."

They sang "We Shall Not Be Moved," which they said is a traditional freedom song. "We hope each of you will not be moved from being responsible, respectful and safe in all you

do," Ducally and Henneman said.

The fifth grade had been working for the three to four weeks before the assembly on a traditional Sword Dance from North Skelton.

They did not dance the day of the assembly, but showed their PowerPoint presentation that they all appeared in.

Rather than hurry up and learn a song St. Martin said she told them that they had been "Responsible, Respectful and Safe" with their dance.

They used paint-stirrers from Home Depot, painted silver, for the swords, St. Martin said.

St. Martin said it is "fascinating how [the dance] works."

Caitlin Ong introduced for the fifth grade.

"We worked on acting responsibly, respectfully and safely as we learned a traditional sword dance from North Skelton. We hope you enjoy our PowerPoint presentation of our cooperative work," Ong said.

The event finale was St. Martin singing "The Washington Oak Wallaby Song" with all of the students.

While the pre-school and kindergarten didn't sing, "They are still young," St. Martin said, she did say they are starting with their Wallaby slips.

Students get Wallaby slips when they are recognized for behaviors that are responsible, respectful or safe. They can then be redeemed for certain rewards.

Overall, St. Martin said about the whole student body, "We were very pleased and they really were very good and enjoyed the special guests."