

December 6, 2016

WSLEA Board:

Please accept this letter of heart felt gratitude for your support of Central Valley High School's Winter Camp Program. I am not sure that a letter can fully express the impact your dollars made on our students.

One hundred and sixty-eight students attended Winter Camp at Pinelow Camp & Retreat Center in Deer Lake, Washington. Of these students, many fall into At Risk categories: the bullied and the bully. Surprisingly, many are both. We have students whose families live under the poverty line, and their families struggle every day. We have those whose families have the basic needs, but are missing the guidance and support emotionally. We have those with an innate sense of how to make things right in the halls of CVHS. All of these students found strength and courage at Winter Camp.

Throughout the 3 days at Camp, we taught the students about the Words Campaign: words do hurt and words can heal. We gave them tools to safely stop bullying: name it, claim it, and stop it. We used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to explain why people do what they do. We challenged students to find their comfort zone and then jump over it: the challenge course symbolized their growth and taking the risk of change. This year, we implemented a curriculum we designed called Boxes. It focused on constraints we put on others because of perceived expectations: the boxes we put them in and don't let them out of. We also focused on the boxes we put ourselves in. The bar we set for ourselves often limits our potential.

Since we got back to school, we have seen students using the skills we learned. Because our junior staff act as mentors to the campers, we have had many campers find their junior staff to ask, "What should I do?" Our senior staff has witnessed campers stopping inappropriate comments, standing up for students who can't stand up for themselves, calling out negative behavior by students and staff.

I can fill up pages of stories about change. After nearly 20 years of camp, the stories seem to repeat themselves: a self-identified bully said, "I realized that I need to be nicer to people. Just because I hurt doesn't mean that I should hurt others" or a English as a Second Language student, walked up to a new student sitting all alone, "Hi, I am R. Who are you?" or the student who feels like they have no control, standing up by saying, "Hey, that isn't right"

Thank you again. Your money helped support our program and support changing the lives of teens. Thank you letters from our students are coming because they want you to know how important you are to this program.

Leanne Donley

CVHS Winter Camp Director