



Saint Viator Students Urge Classmates to Give Peace A Chance



Students sign the Peace Week banner to show their commitment to making peace.

All they are saying is give peace a chance. Echoing the words of John Lennon, a team of “Peacebuilders” at Saint Viator High School in Arlington Heights set out to influence their classmates during a culminating project they called, “Peace Week.”

Led by junior Connor Romenesko of Barrington and seniors Maura Wolfe of Arlington Heights and Lizzy Griesmaier of Cary, students spent the week reflecting on global issues related to poverty and violence, as well as smaller ways to bring about peace right in the hallways of their own school.

“We wanted to start out by tackling things that affect our own community,” Wolfe says, pointing to things like discouraging gossip and promoting respect

among students.

The three student leaders came up with the project after attending the Peacebuilders Initiative last summer at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago along with 60 high school students from across the city and suburbs.

Each student was challenged to carry out a “peace project” at their school or parish, as part of the Peacebuilders initiative started by former Chicago Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, to promote peacemaking and reconciliation.

At Saint Viator, the Peacebuilders led morning prayer, offering facts on specific issues related to injustice and offering students ways to work for peace.

One tangible symbol of their commitment was a banner signed by students as a show of their commitment to making peace. The banner, which will hang in the school’s cafeteria for the remainder of the year, drew hundreds of signatures.

They also sold Livestrong-styled bracelets --- Lions Working For Peace --- and created a Facebook page as a further way to reach classmates.

“It’s another way to inform them,” Wolfe said. “We wanted them to take our message seriously. We’re encouraging them to be a positive influence in our school.”

The sale of the bracelets raised more than \$300 for Viatorian ministries in Haiti, over and above the \$30,000 in donations collected the week before.

“In the past, students have held one-day events, but we wanted to create something more ongoing,” Griesmaier said. “We tried to give them something to think about every day, and hopefully, we’ve made an impact.”

Campus ministry officials think the message has a chance, since it came from the students themselves.

“They’re working to inspire their classmates to have a global awareness of injustice,” says Tim Masterton, campus minister, “but also to realize that change truly starts within each one of us.”