

Upcoming News from Antioch Community High School

While Illinois students will be celebrating Casimir Pulaski holiday on March 3—and probably wondering who he was—25 Antioch Community High School students will be in New Orleans experiencing firsthand the reconstruction of its school system after the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

These students are participating in an ongoing, innovative program called Seminars for Scholars. Designed by ACHS principal Mike Nekritz, the program exposes students to the value conflicts inherent in complex contemporary issues. Students have examined, for example, the balance between the need for public safety and rights of the accused with a notable civil rights lawyer from Chicago who has litigated police abuse cases, as well as scrutinized the effectiveness and fairness of negative political advertising with a national political consultant. The students' final seminar last year was a private meeting with Senator Dick Durbin, the powerful majority whip of the U.S. Senate, who explained how value differences inspire and sometimes doom legislation. This year students questioned three state representatives about the reasons for the impasse in Illinois state government and learned from a U.S. Army brigadier general about the difficulties that veteran hospitals face treating soldiers who have returned from Iraq with traumatic brain injuries.

For the past two years, the students have met Mr. Gary Solomon, President and CEO of Solomon Consulting Services, to discuss the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation on schools. Impressed by the caliber of the students and the creative design of the program, Solomon arranged for the students to visit New Orleans to see how educators are striving to rebuild and strengthen local schools.

After arriving on Sunday, March 2, the students will confer with local educational leaders about their plans. During the following two days, they will advise New Orleans teens about creating their own Seminars for Scholars program, assist in the rebuilding of local schools, and view the devastation still remaining from the hurricane.

Principal Nekritz believes the students will be changed by the trip. Upon returning, they will “see themselves as leaders who can solve problems, both in their schools and in the wider world.”

For more information on Seminars for Scholars, contact Mike Nekritz at mnekritz@sequoits.com or 847-838-7620.