

For Immediate Release

Date: Jan. 2, 2018

Contact: Scott Rodman: scottdrodman@gmail.com; 920-904-6666.

FOND DU LAC--A preview of Challenge Day 2018, a national anti-bullying workshop targeted to local students, will be held Wednesday, Jan. 17, at 6:30 p.m. in the McLane Room of the Fond du Lac Public Library, 39 Sheboygan St. The evening will feature two local residents sharing the impact of their experiences 10 years ago as high school students during Challenge Day 2008. The public is invited to attend to learn more about the upcoming Challenge Day, which is sponsored by Ebony Vision, United for Diversity and Open Circle Unitarian Fellowship. Information about how to volunteer at the in-school event will be provided; donations to fund the project also are welcomed.

The Feb. 8 Challenge Day will include 100 Fond du Lac High School students selected by faculty and staff to engage in the day-long interactive and intergenerational programming targeted at stopping bullying behaviors. Through musical exercises and other activities, Challenge Day seeks to create an environment which reduces tensions and promotes acceptance and understanding in the school. Two trained professional leaders relate their own experiences of being bullied, abused, or traumatized as children and then tell about their recovery. These adults lead the students through a full day of exercises, with 25 compassionate adult volunteers from the community engaged side-by-side with the student participants.

Former students Vicente Lezama and Benjamin Giles participated in Challenge Day 2008.

"I have a vivid recollection of that day, because it was a highlight of my high school days," Lezama said. "During middle school, I was picked on, called names and humiliated, primarily by one boy. He was also a participant at that Challenge Day. At the end of the day, he came forward and publicly and sincerely apologized in front of a room of 140 people. It was a miracle, which released me from my view of myself as not being accepted by my peers."

Giles credits Challenge Day for influencing his career choice. "I was a mentor and immediately after the experience, I sought out those I thought that I had done wrong...." xxxxxx [I'll get more from him if you think we need more content] YES--NEED TO KNOW WHAT HIS CAREER IS AND MORE ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF THE DAY. Also, What do you mean by mentor—was he an adult helper or a student in 2008? *If not a student, I need to revise the lede and intro sentence here.*

"We are concerned about the increasing levels of bullying and acts of intolerance at our school and at schools across the country," said Ebony Vision President and Challenge Day 2008 volunteer Daisy Frazier. "Challenge Day directly addresses this problem by having students in small groups examine and explore bullying, no matter what kind of discrimination is at the source."

Scott Rodman, a board member of United for Diversity and a social justice committee member at Open Circle UU Fellowship, also was an adult volunteer in 2008. “In the last nine years, I have been involved in many activities to make our community more welcoming regardless of our differences, and I think Challenge Day is the most rewarding one-day program that has come to our community,” he said. “That is the reason I have urged the community to bring it back.”

Other area high schools that have scheduled or hosted Challenge Day events are St. Mary’s Springs, Chilton, Kiel, and Campbellsport. Challenge Day is also the name of the California-based non-profit organization that created and leads the programs, which have reached more than 1.5 million young people in the US, Canada, and some European countries. Last year alone, 90,000 young people participated.

For further information about how to volunteer or to contribute to fund the program, contact Scott Rodman at scottdrodman@gmail.com or 920-904-6666. Also visit the organization’s website at www.challengeday.org.

###