

# Leadership for Life

A Peer Group Connection Conference

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Simon Forum & Athletic Center  
Drew University, Madison, New Jersey

The following story and photos appeared in The Daily Record in Morris County, New Jersey.

## Hundreds attend youth conference in Madison

BY VIDYA PADMANABHAN

DAILY RECORD

Friday, January 11, 2008

MADISON -- The candidates who would be the country's leaders are being keenly watched not just by those who will be casting their votes in November, but also by tomorrow's voters.

This was apparent at a summit for student leaders from several New Jersey and New York high schools held at Drew University on Thursday.

Almost all of the students stood up when asked whether they were following the national primary election action.

They were asked why their peers should also be following national developments.

"Because you live in this country, too," said Stephen DiSalvio, a Chatham High School sophomore.

### Training for tomorrow

The students were there to share their opinions on leadership and to get a glimpse of a diverse world in which they will be expected to assume the lead in the future.

For more than 20 years, the Princeton Center for Leadership Training, a nonprofit organization, has worked with secondary schools in the tri-state region, training teachers to develop peer leadership programs in their schools. Juniors and seniors act as role models in the program and help freshmen and sophomores make a successful transition from middle school to high school.

On Thursday, more than 300 upperclassmen and a few underclassmen from 13 urban and suburban schools gathered to polish their leadership skills. It was the first of many planned, large-scale interschool summits, according to the organization.

### Looking for leadership

The leadership summit was particularly relevant in this national election year, said Sharon Rose Powell, president of the Princeton Center, "when we're on the search for new and vital leadership in our country."

"I told (the students) to remember to always give back," said Essex County Prosecutor Paula Dow, one of the public and private sector leaders who addressed the students.

Dow spoke of the importance of proactively assuming leadership, and she cited the challenges she has faced since assuming office, such as the August homicides of several young college students in Newark. "None of us will know when we'll be hit with a challenge," she said.

### **Peer interaction**

Students from different schools sat grouped around tables in a gym, soberly considering the points raised by the moderators.

"Vision posters" -- collages depicting the meaning of leadership -- developed by the teams lined the walls. Some of the posters featured clocks to indicate the time factor in decision-making, and some featured open hands and fists, to symbolize teamwork.

Several students mentioned their appreciation of the opportunity to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds.

Tory Skinner, a Chatham High School junior, found that upperclassmen from other schools had the same observations and problems -- including inattentive freshmen (for whom the peer group connection program is mandatory), she said.

"It's really good," she said of her interactions that day. "Especially coming from Chatham, where we don't have diversity at all. I've learned so much in the last couple of hours."

Katherine Farfan of Emerson High School in Union City tore open the wrapper of her cereal bar and offered it to her neighbor, Stephen DiSalvio of Chatham High School.

"We're all different, but we all have things in common," Farfan said. "We're all here for the same reasons."



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Tory Skinner of Chatham High School, standing at center, jokes with her team members while making a poster during work groups at the Princeton Center for Leadership Training's "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



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Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Princeton Center for Leadership Training sponsored a "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Princeton Center for Leadership Training sponsored a "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Trainer Calvin Thomas smiles as he points to a student after answering a question at the Princeton Center for Leadership Training's "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Alex St. Romain during the leadership exercises at the Princeton Center for Leadership Training's "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Alex St. Romain of Chatham High School writes on her team's poster during the leadership exercises at the Princeton Center for Leadership Training's "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Trainer Kietha Biggers leads teams during the Princeton Center for Leadership Training's "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp



Madison--Jan 10, 2008--Christina Guerriero, second from left, takes part in a work group during Princeton Center for Leadership Training's "Leadership for Life" event at Drew University. photo/Bob Karp