

# Area students sow seeds of peace

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Despite the recent rise of conflict in the Middle East, some local Jewish and Arab American students are doing their part to form an understanding among the two cultures they believe will one day lead to peace.

The good news is the students have agreed to meet regularly to spread the word among their friends and peers at their respective schools about what the other culture has to offer.

Graduates and staff from Seeds of Peace held a teen coexistence workshop recently in Farmington Hills.

Members from the organization's Michigan chapter chose a group of local Arab-American and Jewish-American youngsters for their excellent leadership abilities to participate in coexistence activities and discussions led by Seeds of Peace staff.

The nonprofit organization helps teens learn the skills of making peace.

Waleed Brinjikji, a junior at Andover High School, was one of the students invited to attend. He said he walked away wiser.

"I finally clarified the stance that Jewish people in America

have on Israel," he said. "I found that there is not one universal opinion, but several opinions which were all very different."

The 17-year-old said it was interesting to learn about different religious aspects.

"I also appreciated being able to get my feelings across in a formal way," Waleed said.

Jennifer Bloom, 16, a sophomore at West Bloomfield High School, also was chosen to attend the conference.

"It was a really enriching experience," she said.

She and Waleed pointed out the workshop had the 20 students perform coexistence sessions where games based on trust were played.

She said some of the issues the students spoke about were difficult to hear at times.

"A lot of it was trying to understand each other," she said. "Me being Jewish and their beliefs... they asked us about the Jewish religion - there is a big difference in what we think."

Waleed pointed out another activity at the workshop. He said students had to pick four classifications about themselves, and place the descriptions on labels and label themselves.

"It was interesting to see

what other people labeled themselves as," Waleed said.

What do students plan to do with the information they've learned?

"I plan to help eliminate any misconceptions anyone has had about Islam," said Waleed. "I will also try to find out more about the Jewish standings on Israel. Once I have learned this, I feel as though I would be empowered to help both communities, in the Middle East and here, become more close."

This month, the teens will meet again to discuss starting their own Seeds of Peace youth chapter. The workshop was an apparent success because the students will continue to talk with each other on their own, Jennifer said.

"We hope to get more people involved, maybe set up activities together to understand each other," Jennifer said.

"I was touched by the experience," she added, pointing out that her friends and peers at school have shown an interest.

Waleed said he was glad he attended the workshop.

"I believe that education is what eliminates ignorance," he said. "Now that I am educated about what 'the other side' thinks, I feel as though I have less ignorance and more power."

# City tobacco sting results in three tickets, 20 comply

BY SUE BUCK  
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Three Farmington clerks were ticketed for selling tobacco to an underage decoy March 21.

However, 20 clerks did not sell to the 17-year-old Farmington High School student, who was employed by the Farmington Public Safety Department.

The sting was done in conjunction with Oakland County, as part of an effort statewide, because the state-wide compliance rate is in jeopardy of falling below 70 percent, said Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss.

"Consequently some federal funds are jeopardized," Goss said. "We've been asked to bring that compliance rate back in line."

Farmington has a compliance rate of 85 percent, higher than the state average, he said. Farmington Detective Aaron Malewski and Commander Robert Schulz conducted the tobacco sting operation.

"This was the worst of the stings," Goss said. "Last time we didn't have any (violators)."

In the first, on March 10, 1998, two out of 23 businesses visited sold to the decoy. The second, which resulted in 100 percent compliance among 18 businesses, was May 22, 2001.

Clerks ticketed this time were: Imran Michael, of Sunoco Station, 31233 Grand River; Steven Miller, Grand River/Halsted Shell Station, 37375 Grand River and Robert Sabagh, Capital Cigar, 34785 Grand River in the World Wide Plaza.

Each appeared in 47th District Court April 1 before Magistrate Dennis Peeney and pled guilty, according to a court spokesman.

The violation is a misdemeanor which carries a penalty of \$500 and/or 90 days in jail.

None of the stores cited previously sold tobacco to a minor, Goss said.

At least one business owner disagrees with the way the stings were conducted.

"My concern is the procedure," said Luma Barkho, manager of the Sunoco Station. "The procedure wasn't right. I wasn't here. I wasn't the one who sold to the minor."

The store has been operating since 1998 and has a clean record, Barkho said. They plan to take videotape of the transaction to an as-yet-unscheduled court hearing.

"The person sold to was minutes in and out," Barkho said. "We didn't know if he was underage or not."

The manager at the Grand River/Halsted Shell Station

declined comment Tuesday. She said Millor was no longer employed there.

Calls made to Capital Cigar requesting comment weren't returned.

Farmington City Councilwoman Mary Bush wanted to make sure that those who did not sell tobacco received the proper recognition.

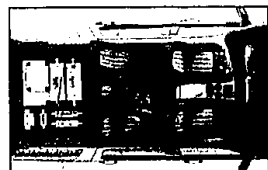
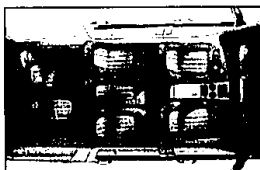
"We had three who sold to minors but we had many more who did not sell to minors," Bush said at the April 1 Farmington council meeting.

The stores that didn't sell to the decoy were: Mobil Station, 33330 Eight Mile; Clark Station, 22146 Farmington; Amoco Station, 22420 Farmington; Farmer Jack, 22128 Farmington; CVS Pharmacy, 23391 Farmington; Orchard-10 IGA, 24065 Orchard Lake; Rite Aid Pharmacy, 24089 Orchard Lake; Grand/Orchard Party Store, 22840 Orchard Lake; Nine/Grand Party Store, 30790 Grand River; Sammy's Pizza, 32330 Grand River; Benner's Amoco, 32410 Grand River; Cigar Emporium, 33185 Grand River; Tweency's Deli, 34707 Grand River; Fresh Apples, 35243 Grand River; GR/Drake Mobil Station, 35365 Grand River; Knart, 37175 Grand River and Marathon, 32340 Grand River.



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