

Cloverdale students learn price of freedom

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck00@homecomm.net

Roger Martin, principal of Cloverdale Developmental Center, told a Martin Luther King day assembly at the school Jan. 21 how he first met Louis Johnson, who is retired from the Air Force.

Johnson had come into the school on Freedom Road in Farmington about a year ago to speak about aviation awareness.

"He reminded me a lot of my father who enlisted in World War II," Martin said. "My father spent 18 months on board a ship in the South Pacific without ever setting foot on dry land."

Times and circumstances change. Martin informed the group that he was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. Martin was unsure how Johnson would react when he first told him.

"He said, 'We fought for freedom so we could have a choice,'" Martin said.

Some can understand differ-

ences and accept them. "We have to be accepting of people," Martin said.

Johnson, who provided ground support for Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, introduced retired U. S. Air Force Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson. Jefferson is a retired Air Force pilot, Tuskegee airman and prisoner-of-war.

"What does freedom cost?" Jefferson asked. "You can eat where you want, go where you want to go. There are no guards. This is the greatest country in the world."

Cloverdale's 100 students have severe mental and/or multiple impairments.

Martin told his story prior to the dedication of the peace pole on which eight different languages proclaim, "May Peace Prevail on Earth."

Cloverdale teacher Chuck Nachtrab was responsible for promoting the idea of a peace pole.

The peace pole has eight different languages — Spanish,



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER
Peace: Students and staff dedicated their peace pole at Cloverdale School.

Arabic, Idu, a Nigerian language, Hebrew, Korean, Mohawk, Sign Language and Braille.

An engraved plaque will bear the message of Martin Luther King Day: "Peace will become a reality when all people are treated as equals. May the ability of the students of Cloverdale to accept those they interact with be an example for all."

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and videos of the civil rights movement.

Alexandria repeated her performance at the ceremony.

Pat Piskulich, assistant professor of political science at Oakland University, spoke to the people in attendance in the city council chambers.

He pointed out King's influences, such as Gandhi, who led his own struggle for equality through peaceful means.

"King said nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice and not people," he said.

America is still very much about race, the professor noted.

"After today we will go back to our jobs and I will go back to my classroom," he said, "but taking time out for today is important because it keeps us examining ourselves."

Blaasen and Jim Hall, also a co-chairman of the Multicultural/

Multiracial Committee, also spoke.

"All Americans owe Dr. King for many reasons," Hall said. "He had courage that led the U.S. in the battle for democracy."

He advocated working toward King's dream.

"Any idea worth holding onto, it's worth being improved," Boleen said, "Let's all take Dr. King's example and carry on the dream."

Kids take district to task over opening for MLK Day

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER
sbuck00@homecomm.net

"It's not right. It's not right."

That's what Zach Shapiro, 10, a fifth-grader at Hillside Elementary and his friend, Chance Jones, 9, a third-grader at St. Fabian School chanted as each held up homemade signs Monday outside the school administration building in Farmington protesting that the Farmington Public School District was open for business on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Both schools were open.

Ken Shapiro, Zach's father, who brought the two boys, looked on. He also planned to take their demonstration to each of their schools.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER
Protest: Hillside Elementary student Zach Shapiro (left) and St. Fabian student Chance Jones skipped school to protest not having a day off for Martin Luther King Day. Zach's Dad, Ken Shapiro, supported the boys' efforts.

"They have been planning this all year," Shapiro said.

The holiday is a union-negotiated item. The district will be closed next year for the first time.

Leatha Randall, who works for Farmington Schools, informed the protesting trio of this as she left the administration building.

For years, it was believed people appreciated the programs presented in the school district that day, he said at the peace pole dedication ceremony at Cloverdale School Monday.

About five or six years ago people took notice of what institutions appreciated being open or closed. "There's no other holiday where schools have tried to tell people how to observe it," he said. "Now major employers also close."

The next time Farmington

Hills Superintendent Bob Maxfield visits Hillside Elementary, he plans to chat with the young Shapiro about the subject.

Deb Higgins, Maxfield's executive assistant, noted that there have been no protesters previously.

Karen Stoller, principal of St. Fabian School, said because her school uses transportation provisions appreciated being open or closed. "They just told us that we are having a day off next year," Zach said. "But still, why didn't they do this 10 years ago?"

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