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# THE VSAAC VIEW

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**Is anyone else outraged and tired** of the violence around us? Are we ignoring it, accepting it or pretending it does not affect us? Unfortunately, violence does affect us. We can be the victim of a violent act whether we live or work in the suburbs, a city or in the country. Violence affects our safety and security where-ever we happen to be– in a shop, a bank, on the highway, or even in our own homes. Our children are not always safe, even in school. There are far too many school shootings, group/gang disputes, and bullying in our children's world.

Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman is an expert on violent crime. He says that violent crime is five times greater now than in the 1950's. He also said that 30 years of research concludes that **media violence (including movies and TV) causes violence in society; and, video games are particularly dangerous** because they are interactive. He says video games stunt or retard brain development. Researchers show a catastrophic shutdown of left brain processing (logical, thinking side of our brain) when kids interact or view violent acts. (info from CT Post 10/18)

Our children are learning violence; they are learning to be violent. Violent children today will be violent adults tomorrow. We need to make a change.

We can't expect one group to take on the challenge alone. We can all do our part to make our communities less likely to breed violence. All adults impact children and teens by the way we treat them, the way we interact with them and our expectations of them. Parents, of course, have the most impact. Teachers and school personnel are the next group that have considerable impact. Home and school are the two places in a child's life that affect how a child views the world, and, what his role in that world will be.

Little changes on our part, will make big differences. Specifically— \*we can all be less tolerant of confrontation; \*we can teach children ways to work out differences; \*we can teach kids to channel their anger and not explode into violent acts; \*we can teach tolerance and respect for differences; \*we can be vigilant against any form of bullying; \*we can be respectful of others; \*we can be warm and caring; and, \*we can all be good listeners.

## STUDENTS MAKING A CHANGE

**The following is an article written by Mr. Christian Allard's journalism class from Derby High School**

In a packed auditorium, Friday morning (10/16), students and staff of Derby HS listened in emotionally-charged silence as guest speaker Brandie Orozco presented them with **Rachel's Challenge**. Orozco urged all in attendance to bring change to their lives through acts of kindness and compassion inspired by Rachel Scott, the first victim of the Columbine shootings in 1999

Rachel wrote an essay, 'My Ethics, My Codes of Life' which was the focus of the ideas behind the presentation that continues to influence more than 11 million people all over the world. Rachel's writing urged its readers to start a "chain reaction" through random acts of kindness. In the essay, Rachel admitted that her goals of spreading kindness and compassion "seem impossible," but she believed that the world would "never know how far a little kindness can go" unless we all practice it every day in our lives.

Orozco gave specific methods and suggestions to employ kindness and inspire compassion. During her interactive presentation, Orozco suggested small, achievable habits: keep a journal, record your goals, avoid prejudice and, express feelings for your loved ones.

A sense of warmth filled the auditorium at the conclusion of the presentation as students streamed down the aisles to sign a banner commemorating their commitment to Rachel's Challenge. What began as sorrow for the loss of a young visionary transformed into a greater sense of community as Derby HS moved toward the change Rachel Scott sought to inspire.

## Quotes about Rachel's Challenge:

"The best High School program I have ever seen, it was inspirational and a real call to action."

*Fran Thompson, Derby High School Principal*

"The most important thing I learned from Rachel's challenge was how everyone coming together over one girl's vision, pulling together for one cause, can change the world."

*Derby HS student*

"How far just one act of kindness and helping others can go. You can change someone's life or change someone's life by just showing that you care."

*Derby HS student*

This was the most impacting high school program I have ever seen. To see our students, one after another, get up and speak from the heart like that was nothing short of profound. A real life changing experience."

*John Saccu, Youth Bureau*



More than 20 years ago Robert Fulghum wrote the poem printed to the right.

"Everything you need to know is in there somewhere", according to Fulghum, "the *Golden Rule* (treat others as you would like them to treat you), love and basic sanitation; ecology and politics; and equality and sane living.



### **All I Really need to know I learned in Kindergarten by Robert Fulghum**

Most of what I really need  
To know about how to live  
And what to do and how to be  
I learned in kindergarten.

These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush the toilet.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life -

Learn some and think some

And draw and paint and sing and dance

And play and work everyday some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world,

Watch out for traffic,

Hold hands and stick together.

Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed  
in the cup: the roots go down and the plant  
goes up and nobody really knows how or why,  
but we are all like that.