

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

• SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATE IN CHALLENGE DAY

With each new year the challenge presents itself for the Centerville School District to do bigger and better things for their students and staff. With the 2014-15 school year approaching, there were many changes already underway at the school.

New students, new teachers, new protocols, new management, the list goes on and with any sort of change comes hesitation. Hesitation is what presented itself on October 6th, the day before Centerville's first experience with a program called Challenge Day.

Students and staff voiced hesitation about participating in something so new and unknown. When Challenge Day was finished, however, there was zero hesitation and 100 percent understanding and acceptance.

The Challenge Day motto is 'Be the Change' which Centerville K-12 Counselor Kendra Hotchkiss saw take hold of the student body on the day of the event.

"I envision the goal is that students will look within themselves and change to show more acceptance and understanding towards others," Hotchkiss said. "This is exactly what happened on October 7th for the Centerville School."

On the day of the event excitement was in the air.

Staff, students, parents, community members and the Challenge Day advisors came together to provide an opportunity for the students to really talk with each other and understand each other without stereotypes and cliques that can form in the school environment.

"Acceptance and understanding was displayed to each other throughout the day," Hotchkiss said.

Challenge Day gave the students the chance to come together and truly accept one another. Students continually said the day was an amazing experience they would not forget.

"In working with kids for twenty-three years, this was one of the best activities that I've ever been involved in," Centerville School Board President Sylvia Kroger said of the event.

"It leveled the field for all of the students involved so that they could see each other just as people and not part of a label or a group."

Weeks after the program, several students at the school were seen displaying the love hand sign that was introduced during Challenge Day. Hotchkiss said more than a month after the program, students would rush to her with excitement when something happened that reminded them about the program.

"I could see the effects of the changes made that day, within the school," Hotchkiss said. "I can still see those changes. Though smaller, the steps towards a better atmosphere are still being made."

No one expected the program to change

the school environment overnight, however, the changes demonstrate the students are more aware of each other and the struggles each of them face every day.

"It's hard to teach a child humility, but I think this activity helped them understand better some of the obstacles that some of the kids, that they see every day, face," Kroger said. "It was so very meaningful for me to be part of this activity!"

