

NOVEMBER, 2005

student leadership

The Student Leadership Training Program
A Newsletter for the Advisers of Student Activities

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The DifferenceMaker

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1

THE DIFFERENCEMAKER—AN ADVISER NEWSLETTER

From Where I Sit by Dr. Jim Fitzgerald SLTP Founder & Director



Our culture is famous for what's in and what's out. Lists abound. We even applaud when someone is voted off the island. Like most of you I read Ralph Keyes' book "Is There Life After High School," which distinguished between the students who are part of the group and those who, for whatever reason, are left out. Our students move in cliques, groups, tribes, and teams; and so do we. High school culture possesses a very clear caste system.

So what effect does a disaster such as Hurricane Katrina have on this process? What are the

effects of such a major disaster on individual teenagers and where and how they fit in? I wonder about the teenagers who had their worlds changed dramatically when they loaded up their cars for what they thought was a few days away until the hurricane passed. Then the city went underwater, and the access roads were destroyed, and the martial law and mandatory evacuation orders stretched into weeks if not months, and now the prospect of returning to find those worlds intact has become remote. Now they are in a new school, in temporary housing, a new youth group, a new town—a new world. Their place on the sports team and the drama team is no longer secure as they are

'outsiders' to the system.

This has made me reflect about how transitional many of our students are. They live in multiple homes, shared custody situations, sometimes moving to different living arrangements with unfortunate regularity. They have their world rocked by trials other than hurricanes, and for them it is simply a way of life. I am hurting anew for students who don't have stable homes or student activities or adult support. They are consistently 'outsiders' to the system. Many quickly fall into the "outcaste" roles available to them. The expectations for the outcastes are primarily negative, aren't they?

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2006 SLTP Conferences

Where leaders learn HOW to make a difference!

- **The ReEnergizer Conference**
November 26
- **InterLead—the Interstate Student Leadership Forum**
April 2

- **Officer Training Seminar**
July 6 - 7
- **Leadership Training Conferences (4)**
July 11 - 15; July 18 - 22;
Aug 1 - 5; Aug 8 - 12
- **Advanced Leadership Conferences (4)**

July 12 - 15; July 19 - 22;
Aug 2 - 5; Aug 9 - 12

- **Leadership in Athletics**
July 27 - 28
 - **Adviser Certification**
July 27 - 28
- The Leadership Center**
July 12 - 15

Movie Review—Napoleon Dynamite A good Lock-In movie

Napoleon Dynamite

MPAA rating: PG for thematic elements and language.

Discussion Starters: [Confidence](#) [Regret](#) [Work](#)

Synopsis: Napoleon Dynamite (Jon Heder) endures loneliness at his oppressive high school, but an Internet-obsessed brother, Kip (Aaron Ruell), and a scheming uncle (John Gries) keep his home life just as stressed as his school life. Napoleon finds solace in working to get his lone friend, Pedro (Efren Ramirez), elected president of the student body.

Leadership Filter: Anyone who has ever felt like a loner or loser will undoubtedly fall in love with Napoleon Dynamite. This offbeat, quirky character study takes the mundane tragedies of teen life and ultimately turns them into an uplifting message for community and friendship. Writer/director Jared Hess manages to make the bizarre seem believable by maintaining a consistent tone and cre-

ating a timeless world that's familiar, yet slightly off-kilter.

An outstanding performance from Jon Heder as Napoleon holds these otherwise loosely related vignettes tightly together. How he manages to make an outlandish dweeb with a bad attitude endearing is beyond comprehension, but he wins your heart from the first moment this beleaguered teenager saunters onto a school bus filled with elementary school children. From his childish drawings of mythical creatures to his awkward braggadocio about his ability with nunchucks to his unwavering faith in his friend Pedro, Napoleon is the type of odd duck you can't help but root for.

The rest of the cast also shines, especially Napoleon's pasty brother, Kip, who somehow brings an oblivious dignity to his role as an Internet-obsessed goofball. Though *Napoleon Dynamite* doesn't have a polished story or grand cinematic scope, it has a huge heart that will win over even

the biggest nerd-hating jock.

The film's main theme can be summed up in Napoleon's simple question: "Wanna play with me?" The camera often finds him playing tether ball by himself. This humorous visual becomes a metaphor for the loner looking for friendship and connection. In fact, all the misfits in the film seek relationship. (And by relationship, we mean connection with someone not related by blood. Like most teens, friendship with family doesn't count.)

What's amazing is how this inherent need plagues all types of teens, not just the outwardly awkward. The need for connection has been hardwired into our souls, and student activities willingly offers it. Discuss with your students whether school is the first place that people think of when they want to make friends. If not, work together to find ways to make this a reality.

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Mix it up Day—November 15

Next week, more than 1,000,000 students are expected to accept the challenge to begin bridging social boundaries in their schools.

On **Mix It Up at Lunch** Day 2005, there are plans in place all over the country to help students to step out of their comfort zones and sit somewhere new, with someone new.

We are aware of 36 of SLTP's member schools who

plan to participate in this event and another 6 who plan to participate on another day because their calendar would not allow their participation on the 15th.

On Tuesday November 15, Mix It Up at Lunch Day 2005, students and advisers like you are going to stir things up in their school cafeterias.

The school cafeteria is the perfect place for this action. For most the cafeteria is

the scariest setting in the school. Exclusion and social bullying abound and hundreds of students do everything they can to avoid going there every day.

For more information and materials visit: www.tolerance.org

Will you accept the challenge?

Parent, Principal & Adviser Programs at the REE

There will be a special presentation for parents, advisers and principals at the ReEnergizer Conference. Our own Dr. Jim Fitzgerald will present "Helping teens to help teens who are hurting."

Today's student leaders face very real challenges and need real support systems to be able to "take back their schools." Jim will share what he has learned traveling around the country from successful practitioners of student based activity programs.

We offer these sessions not only because many advisers, principals and parents do the driving to get our students to the ReE, but we offer them because we want to do more to enable our student leaders to develop as much as possible.

The aim of the special workshops for advisers and principals is simple. We hope to inform and encourage every principal and adviser to maximize the development of their student leadership. Additionally there are special workshops for parents that

are geared to their needs as the parents of student leaders.

We will also provide both groups a "peek behind the curtain," which will enable them to better understand the environment we create at SLTP and how they might be best able to empower their student leaders.

Please encourage your principal and fellow advisers to attend (and to drive). We think you will be glad that they did.

From where I sit continued from page 1

So what can we do? Well first we can look at the new students or visitors. I imagine that many of our student leaders, advisers and teachers who work with students have good intentions with regard to acceptance and inclusion. When new students join the school, I hope we can help each other to understand how desperately lonely it can be to be in unfamiliar surroundings without even knowing your place in the system, let alone having any status or input.

Teenagers are remarkably shortsighted and present-centered. Hope is easily crushed when the

current plan, team, club, activity, or relationship is suddenly ended. Most draw inward. Some act out. The new students may do both.

Secondly we can look at the students who are left behind, left out, ignored or cast out. The answers about what to do are complex, but they are also urgent.

At the ReEnergizer our staff has prepared a theatrical presentation titled, "if not you – who?" which will address the everyday loneliness and grief that teens experience everywhere.

The banality of the events depicted is intended to add ur-

gency for the student leaders. As always with our theatrical productions, we are striving to get our student leaders to think, and then to act.

At the conclusion of the production the players will distribute pledge cards to the audience to sign and to keep in their wallets as reminders to stand up for what is right even if they are standing alone.

Take a chance on a Kaplan Course

SLTP recently received the gift of a test prep course from Kaplan. The course can be any one of the excellent prep courses that Kaplan offers from their SAT prep course to any of the courses they offer for graduate school test preparation.

This was and is an enormous gift as these courses cost hundreds of dollars.

All of the attendees of last summers programs received an opportunity to get a shot at the course. Most of the parents took advantage. The final opportunity will be at the ReEnergizer Conference. During the lunches tickets will be available for the special drawing. The tickets are \$10. (And since the test prep courses cost hundreds of dollars—

this is a pretty good deal) The winner will be announced during the final ceremonies. All of the proceeds from the raffle will benefit SLTP camperships.

Add one more item to the list of benefits for SLTP Alumni and member schools.

Only Weeks Away—The ReEnergizer Conference

It's now just days away! AND it is not too late to register. You can still register without a late fee until November 15! The holiday and election day interfered with the registration process, so we have extended the deadline. However after November 15 — the registration fee will be \$20. And NO REGISTRATIONS are permitted at the door. All attendees must be pre-registered.

The ReEnergizer Conference is such a special event. We hope you will be among the entire SLTP family, together with all of their friends coming together at Nichols College.

Last year, the ReE hosted over 600 participants from nine different states and over 90 schools. From the looks of the way registrations are pouring in at press time – this year is going to be even bigger. Right now we are even exploring the possibility of a virtual conference link for SLTP Alumni visiting in France and Spain—last year you may recall we had a link

to Spain and China.

If you have not already done so get your registration in as soon as you can. Registration forms can be found on the our website — www.sltp.info—just go to the Conferences page and click on the REE, you'll find a pdf file.

In case you've forgotten - the REE is scheduled for **Saturday November 26** at Nichols College.

The ReE comes at just the right time of the school year. First term is over and done. Traditionally the busiest term of the year for school activities is Second term and the ReE provides the necessary “booster shot” of motivation and positive energy to keep yourself and your organization on the right track.

Bring lots of friends – bring your whole student council and even the “cookie cupcake club.” You should also bring lots of enthusiasm and bring ideas to share and

questions to be answered.

Due to the size of the crowd – we will begin and end the program at the athletic center in the big gym. Plan to park in that parking lot. There is lots of room there for your school bus. To get to the athletic center, drive to the Remillard dorm turn left and follow the noise and signs to the gym parking area.

Among the many other activities and planned for the conference there will be: an Activity Fair, the Alumni Student Election, a presentation of a new SLTP play that focuses on the students who are left behind or left out (bring your administration, advisers); Community Leader recognition and much, much more!

Adviser Certification Conference—July 27-28

Everyone involved in student activities understands the value of cocurricular programs to both school and community. That value has been acclaimed in virtually every national study of our system of education. Yet very little training has been offered for the advisers, sponsors or coaches who are charged with those activities.

Essentially this program provides the opportunity to learn and master the techniques and methodology of advisership. It is a comprehensive program quite unlike most hour long workshops and even day long seminars that merely skim the surface by offer-

ing only idea sharing. To begin with, our program reviews the basic skill areas that are essential to successful advisership - *organization, group process, structure, project planning, involvement, motivation and leadership training*, then we approach the step by step progression through all the aspects of activity programming as teacher preparation.

Fundamentally we hold that successful advisership is the result of actively teaching and preparing students to lead themselves. So the intent of the program is to enable and prepare advisers to teach leadership skills to their students. As a result, our

program is experiential in nature.

The registration fee covers program materials and meals for the four days. The dorm and classrooms are air-conditioned. The program materials include: a leadership manual, an adviser's manual, a book of ideas, an adviser's "toolbox", a program shirt, and a group photo.

Registration is limited. Professional Development Points will be awarded.

Applications and more information can be found on line.

Join us—July 27-28!

Who should attend SLTP?

So, who should attend a program like SLTP ?

Our answer is based on just one qualification.

We believe SLTP is for *any student or adviser* who is interested in learning how to make a difference ! **Student leadership does not require a title.** Nor is it defined through membership in certain activities. Nor is it defined by popularity. To that end, we do not believe that ANY one activity is THE most important activity in a school. Each activity helps to create the fabric of belonging, and therefore ALL of the activities are THE most important.

The majority of students who attend SLTP are very involved in their school and in their community. All are seeking to learn how TO DO more.

The willingness to learn is vital. So is the understanding that leadership is about DOING. Leaders

are defined by what they do - - not by the titles they hold or by the organizations they belong to.

The only program requirements that exist are based on experience.

- ◆ *Delegates to the LTC's* - must be secondary students (junior high or high school).
- ◆ *Delegates to the ALC's* - must have completed the first level.
- ◆ *Delegates to the TLC* - must be graduates of both LTC & ALC.
- ◆ *Delegates to the Adviser Program* - must be practicing or aspiring coaches or advisers.
- ◆ *Delegates to the OTS* - must be officers and /or advisers and have at least one other team member in attendance.
- ◆ *Delegates to the Leadership in Athletics Conference*—must be members of a varsity sport

or coaches.

What each participant should "bring"

- ◇ *a desire to make a difference*
- ◇ *a willingness to learn*
- ◇ *enthusiasm*
- ◇ *an acceptance of growth*
- ◇ *a desire to master change*
- ◇ *a dream to work on*

What SLTP will provide

- ◇ *an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance*
- ◇ *significant learnings and understandings*
- ◇ *the opportunity to practice what we teach*

Napoleon Dynamite continued from page 2

On a similar note, the film's theme affirms that everyone is worthy, no matter how geeky, different, or damaged. The Napoleon Dynamites in their schools, workplaces, or neighborhoods need and deserve the respect and notice due every human being. No one is a mistake or "defected," and respect (acceptance) is meant to be given away.

It's interesting to note that Napoleon's bad attitude toward his family comes directly from his exclusion at school. His antagonism toward his brother and uncle increases in proportion to the beatings and ridicule he receives from his peers. Once he gains the friendship of Pedro and Deb, he finds understanding and compassion for his family members. This might explain the anti-social attitudes your young

people encounter (or display). Toxic words are often a front for fragile hearts that hope beyond hope for a kind response to their barbs. Urge your students to show compassion and perseverance, rather than immediately giving up on someone after a brush off.

Finally, Uncle Rico presents a sad vision of a possible future. A loser in his own right, Rico clings to the past and longs to reclaim his lost high school glory. He has ended up like Napoleon, just from the opposite end of the spectrum. Teaching students to live in the present not the past and not the future is a fundamental role of student activities. Living in the future produces tremendous anxiety as it requires constant meas-

urement often, constant criticism and very little reward. Living in the past takes people out of the game, tying up their time and energy in something meaningless. Encourage your young people to let go of the past and to live in the present.

Lessons for the leadership class (reprinted with permission from [Step it up!](#), a CASA publication)

In our experience, when kids say they're bored, they're really saying they're afraid to take a risk. So we've come up with a diversity of quick hitting anywhere activities to draw them out of their safety zones.

These simple ideas are great for spontaneous time-fillers when you're waiting in line, riding on a school bus, or just hanging out with nothing to do.

- ◆ **Movie Lines**—One person repeats a well-known line from a movie, and the others try to guess the movie. For example:
 - 1) "Whadda ya want, Mary? You want the moon?" from *It's a Wonderful Life*.
 - 2) "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means." from "Princess Bride"
- ◆ **Ask the Radio a Question**—Have one person ask a question, then turn on the radio. The first thing you hear is the answer.
- ◆ **Obstacle Course**—Create an obstacle course using the objects or people around you. Then time each other going through the course. For example, the course might include walking around a booth, getting a drink from the water fountain, and touching the napkin dispenser.
- ◆ **The Nonchalant Walk**—Take turns walking in front the group as if you are a perfect stranger and have no idea the group is there.
- ◆ **Anything Golf**—Choose a small object to throw, and pick a landmark. See who can toss the object closest to the landmark.
- ◆ **Our Today Show**—Appoint one person to be a talk show host, and have other group members be the guests. The host gets to "identify" the guests and give the reason they are on the show. The conversation is then spontaneous.
- ◆ **Trivia Time**—You can play this with a trivia card deck or simply make up your own questions. Pick a Game Master to think up or choose the questions. The person who answers correctly is the new Game Master and gets to pick the next question.
- ◆ **"Jim, I'm Locked In!"**—Ask one person to choose one thing from among four choices, then challenge the group to guess what that person chose. You can choose topics such as possible careers, vacation spots, possessions, role models, and so on. The person makes his or her choice, then says, "Jim, I'm locked in!" (meaning the choice is final). Then everyone tries to guess what the person chose. For example, you might ask a person to choose between owning a

Thank you—webbie to webbie



Thank you for all of the contributions, notes and emails in support for our program and for this newsletter. We are looking forward to another successful year.

This issue is the first full edition of the newsletter for this year, we are pleased to be able to begin publishing our Adviser newsletters ear-

lier this year than last.

Just a reminder that contributions, suggestions for the SLTP newsletter are quite welcome. Send them to: jim@sltp.info

We'll see you "at the ReE."

