Chapter Name
Junior Auxiliary of Columbus, MS

Submitted by Name and Email Address
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Address
P.O. Box 11
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Population Category
15,000 - 29,999

Name of Project
Choose Kindness

Project Category
Outstanding New Project

Total Hours of Service Given by Members
127

Active Membership of Chapter
56

Number of Members Participating
14
**Purpose of Project**
To combat bullying by focusing on early prevention

**Cost of Project**
233.89

**Number of Persons Served**
550

**Narrative**
2019-Martha-Wise-Award-submission-Choose-Kindness.docx

**Digital Photo**
Choose-Kindness.png

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Junior Auxiliary of Columbus

Choose Kindness

127 total hours (2018-2019 academic year)

14 members participating

Anti-bullying project for elementary students


550 students served (2018-2019 academic year)

In early 2018, Junior Auxiliary of Columbus launched Choose Kindness, an interactive anti-bullying project for elementary students. On the heels of the chapter’s successful “Stand Up Speak Out” anti-bullying project for middle school students, the chapter received numerous requests for an anti-bullying project focusing on elementary children. Through conversations with area principals, school counselors, and teachers, along with the knowledge that bullying has become somewhat of a national epidemic, the provisional class of 2017-2018 determined that area elementary schools could benefit extensively from an interactive anti-bullying project presented in a rotating station format that includes related games and role-play scenarios.

In response to the need for an elementary anti-bullying project, the provisional members researched statistics and features of bullying, various methods to combat bullying, as well as the most appealing presentation approach for elementary children. The popular book and movie, Wonder, in which an innocent, bright child with severe facial malformations enters formal school for the first time and becomes a victim of bullying by his classmates, was a source of insight into the mechanics and emotions of bullying situations. A heartwarming quote from the movie, “When given the choice between being right and being kind, choose kind” inspired the
project's theme. From there the class formulated a project where children are encouraged to combat bullying by always choosing kindness. Display boards were designed to reinforce the key points of the four stations. Dynamic PowerPoint presentations were developed to give the children an introductory overview and a conclusion that reviews the pertinent points of the presentation. Additionally, inspirational posters were designed with appealing graphics and the project's theme quote.

After four months of research and preparation, Choose Kindness was ready. The presentation begins with a ten-minute PowerPoint overview which highlights common terms used when discussing bullying, as well as eye-opening statistics on bullying. Then the children are split into smaller groups (10-15 children per group) to rotate through four different stations with colorful, engaging display boards reflecting the material of the station. The "Bullying vs. Conflict" station addresses the difference between bullying and conflict. Here the children learn that a difference of opinion or a simple misunderstanding does not qualify as bullying, but that repeated mistreatment (physical, social or emotional) of a victim by someone in a position of power defines bullying. To reinforce this information the children read scenario cards and determine whether the scenarios are examples of conflict between two children or a true bullying situation. "The Important Role of the Bystander" station encourages children to be positive bystanders through the ABCs: A-alert an adult, B-befriend the target, and C-confront the bully. Increasingly, bystanders are being encouraged to take an active role in being a positive influence on a bullying situation, and this station gives children specific tools to directly and indirectly assist victims of bullying. The "Cyberbullying" station educates children about the different avenues of bullying such as online gaming, email, and social media. The final station addresses "Strategies to Combat Bullying." In addition to discussing methods of preventing
bullying, the children form a chain of kindness with links of colored paper which details acts of kindness the children have given or received. The colorful chain is then hung in a classroom or hallway as a visual reminder of various acts of kindness. As they rotate through the stations, the children have ample opportunity to contribute to the discussion and are asked thought-provoking questions about previous experiences with bullying and the best methods of coping with bullying. The children’s various comments in relation to bullying often guide the discussion as they share their own experiences with bullying. To conclude the hour-long project presentation, the students are shown additional PowerPoint slides that review the concepts covered at the four stations. As they depart the presentation each child receives a blue “Choose Kindness” motivational wristband as a reminder of the project’s theme and how crucial choosing kindness is. Each teacher is given a poster for the classroom which displays the project’s theme quote on a child-friendly background designed by a talented JA member.

While the provisional class of 2018 led the development of Choose Kindness, many active members offered their ideas and insight before the project was launched. With the knowledge that bullying is an ever-present problem in today’s elementary schools, Choose Kindness was adopted by the chapter membership as an ongoing project by the Junior Auxiliary of Columbus in the spring of 2018. Through chapter-wide roundtable discussions, all chapter members remain invested in Choose Kindness as they offer additional ideas to continue to educate area elementary students on ways to successfully combat bullying. In the fall of 2018, fourteen members were directly involved with presentations which saw the project presented at four area elementary schools, reaching 550 students. Members contribute to Choose Kindness primarily through the school presentations, and they also devote time to project training and materials preparation.
Through project evaluations completed by teachers and counselors, as well as post-presentation conversations with administrators, Choose Kindness was met with glowing approval. Many administrators requested that the project, originally developed for 4th grade students, be adapted for younger age groups. In response to this request, the project was presented in the fall of 2018 to children in 2nd-5th grades with minor alterations made to account for the different age groups. Junior Auxiliary of Columbus has found that this project equips children with a variety of tools to stand up to bullying and encourages them to seek help for victims of bullying.

Plans are already underway for presentations during the 2019-2020 school year, as the Choose Kindness committee strives to reach all schools in the service area over a 3-4 year period, effectively reaching the majority of elementary children in the service area. The chapter hopes that through this project elementary children will gain confidence in knowing that no child should ever endure a bullying situation.