



NEWS RELEASE

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STUDENTS EXPRESS HOW VIOLENCE AFFECTS THEIR LIVES

Houston - Alyssa Marie Navarro Mahoney, a student at John Paul II Middle School, Archdiocese of Galveston Houston and Kei DeVonn Harvin, a student at Hamilton Middle School, Cypress Fairbanks, ISD were honored by Harris County Judge Ed Emmett at the annual Houston/Harris County *Do the Write Thing Challenge* awards ceremony and reception. The *Do the Write Thing Challenge* is a project of the National Campaign to Stop Violence and was originated by a grant from the State of Kuwait in gratitude to the United States for the liberation of their country. The *Challenge* gives seventh and eighth grade students the opportunity to communicate through writing about the impact of violence on their lives and what should be done to change the culture of violence.

Over 12,500 students submitted writings in the *Do the Write Thing Challenge*. One hundred and thirty schools in 39 school districts in a seven county region participated in *The Challenge*. Community reader judges selected a boy and girl finalist from each school. A group of local civic leaders chose the two national finalists from among the school finalists.

Two state finalists were also selected. They are Stephanie Castro, a student at Missouri City Middle School, Fort Bend, ISD, and Gustavo Botello, a student at Burbank Middle School, HISD.

The national and state finalists, their parents and teachers are invited to the State *Do the Write Thing* conference in Austin. They will hold a summit to discuss ideas and develop action plans, which are presented to policy makers. Other activities are visits to historical sites and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. The summit ends with a Recognition Ceremony, in which dignitaries honor them in the Chamber of the Texas House of Representatives.

The national finalists of all participating jurisdictions around the country will be honored at events and recognition ceremonies in Washington, DC, hosted by the National Campaign to Stop Violence. A book containing the writings of the 2007 national finalists will be published and placed in the Library of Congress.

More than 37,000 students in the Houston/Harris County region were involved in classroom discussions. The 12,549 students who submitted writings were presented a Certificate of Recognition.

Over 200 school finalists, their parents, teachers, and volunteers attended the ceremony at Minute Maid Park. Jim “Mack” McIngvale was the keynote speaker. Mahoney and Harvin also read their essays. After the ceremony, a reception was held on the Club Level of the Park.

Judge Emmett is chairman of the Houston/Harris County *Do the Write Thing Challenge* Committee. Robert Eckels, former Harris County judge, is chairman of the Texas *Do the Write Thing Challenge (DTWT)* Committee. Of the nine *DTWT* sites in Texas, Houston/Harris County is the largest. It is also the largest site in the country.

For copies of the students' essays, please contact Gloria Roemer at 713-755-4027 or email her at gloria_roemer@co.harris.tx.us.



(photo from left to right: Robert Eckels, Kei DeVonn Harvin, Alyssa Marie Navarro Mahoney, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett)