

Top-Notch Student Council

Lake Placid High stands out statewide

By Risa Merl

Homecoming? Check. Prom? Check. Most any high school Student Council can easily cross these off their to-do lists. But how about an administrative breakfast, animal food drive, a visit from the “grim reaper,” or a teacher team-building workshop? The Student Government Association at **Lake Placid High School** can proudly put a check by each of these and 80 other activities they sponsor annually besides homecoming. Creativity is at the heart of them all. “We try to meet the needs of our diverse student population,” says Melissa Sohn, SGA advisor. “We endeavor to sponsor activities that involve all students.”

SGA also participates in their individual FASC annual state project. Students in the high school’s leadership class volunteer with Lake Placid Elementary School where they read to kids, help teachers with grading, or help take the children to the library.

The Breakfast Club

A top goal and campaign promise for this year’s SGA was to improve communication between the faculty and students. Once a month, SGA officers meet with Principal Dr. Ruth Heckman and Assistant Principal Gary Jenkins at a local restaurant for breakfast. This simple meeting in a relaxed setting allows them to go over plans for upcoming SGA projects and analyze projects that already took place. The principals give their advice and help the officers assess how the completed projects went. “We also give our input on the things that Dr. Heckman is planning on doing and answer her questions like, ‘Should we do this again next year?’” says Toni Ford, SGA president.

Open Council Opens Doors

Another campaign promise was to increase student participation in SGA, which now is at 10 percent. This may seem small, but it means that one out of every 10 Lake Placid students is involved, which is

Wonder Women: (clockwise from left) Treasurer Allie Ford, Vice President Jennifer Jernigan, President Toni Ford, Secretary Erica Redmond, and Executive Member Lissey Donaldson are the energy behind Lake Placid High School’s SGA.

far higher than most schools. Lake Placid SGA’s “open council” system helps students get involved: Although officers are elected, elections for representatives aren’t held. Instead, all students can volunteer as SGA representatives. If they want to join, all they have to do is show up for a Saturday workshop where they participate in team-building activities and SGA has its first official meeting.



Community Counts

SGA knows the importance of building community on campus, but more so, they know the importance of reaching out to the community beyond the high school. Its new “Chamber of Commerce Luncheon” shows its desire to connect with the Lake Placid community. Chamber members come to the high school and eat lunch with SGA officers. “We tell [chamber members] about what’s going on in the high school and ask for their opinions about projects that we’re doing,” Jernigan says.

One of SGA’s largest community service projects is a canned food drive—for animals. “We have a competition among the classes to

see who can bring in the most animal supplies for the Lake Placid Humane Society,” Toni Ford says. Students bring in 2,000 pounds of food, leashes, blankets, toys, and other animal accessories to donate, and the class with the most pounds donated wins.

Teaching the Teachers

This year, Lake Placid welcomed new teachers, and SGA wanted to make sure that they became a unified force. “We had many new teachers this year, and we wanted them all to be acquainted with each other,” Jernigan says. SGA hosted a teacher team-building workshop a week before school started. The teachers sang songs, went on scavenger hunts, and participated in other team-building activities. “SGA planning, organizing, and running the activities made it easier for the administration to participate,” Heckman says. “It also enabled the teachers to see the students as leaders.”

Awareness Is in the Air

Red ribbon week is a project designed to make students aware of the dangers of abusing drugs and alcohol. SGA passes out ribbons, hangs up statistics on walls, and brings in guest speakers. They also “scare” fellow students using the “Grim Reaper.” Students from every class wear statistics on their shirts the entire week such as “I have emphysema from smoking.” At the week’s end, there’s a mock death scene during which a student dressed as the Reaper comes into each class and takes those students, leaving a carnation to symbolize their deaths. When other students walk into the common area to leave school, they see those who “died” wrapped in sheets. In

addition, to focus on drunk driving, SGA parks two wrecked cars outside with the story of how the teenage passengers inside died or killed others.

Better Citizens

Sohn says she’s proud of her SGA for all the hard work put in both during and after school. “They come in before school, after school, on weekends, over vacations, and even over summer break,” she says. During the summer, SGA has meetings once a week to discuss plans for the upcoming year. This involvement isn’t only with the officers—20 to 30 members come in to help every day SGA meets outside of school time.

“I think they’re an organization that not only raises funds to do fun things, but they also do things to make our students better citizens,” Heckman says. “That’s our responsibility to be a part of the community as well as just a part of the school.”

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See in-depth coverage of Lake Placid’s SGA at www.floridaleader.com