

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Student Council members at Buchholz High speak up

Compiled by Stephanie Reck, associate editor

Florida Leader asked students across Florida what they think, and Student Council members at Buchholz High School in Gainesville responded. They told us their thoughts on the national terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. They told us their thoughts on what they believe it means to be a leader. They even told us whom among Florida's public officials they most admired.

Rapid Response

Students spoke highly of their school administrators' response to last fall's terrorist attacks. On that day, administrators announced the news over the intercom system and then made the

decision to allow students to see what was happening in the world. "They allowed CNN to be shown in classes and provided support to students," says Tara Sampson. As well, students praised the sensitivity of their leaders for recognizing the bigger issues. "They were very good about keeping the school updated and following all of the

national moments of silence," says Megan Leah Lane. As Rachel Heidberg says, "They were very sympathetic and encouraging toward students. They came over the intercom to express their grief and encourage a moment of silence and respect."

Student Council responded to both the financial and emotional needs of the victims. "We sent out condolence letters to those who lost loved ones," Heidberg says. As Faydra Long says, "We were there for moral support. We made ourselves available for anyone who wanted to talk." They conducted a donation drive for the American Red Cross and participated in High School for Heroes in which they raised \$1,600 which Compass Bank matched for a total of \$3,200. Tracy Taylor says "the money just kept coming in. People just wanted to help." Buchholz students raised money through a class competition by talking to all the second-period classes, passing around decorated bags, and asking the students to give money. Buchholz leaders also held a blood drive to give aid to the victims, efforts which continue to bring help. Lane and Michael Fleck concur. "The money that Student Council collected recently has been voted to send to more local charities because the Red Cross has received so much money," Lane says. "However, we will still collect money and will send it off as needed."

Advice

Buchholz student leaders not only listen to their student body but advise up-and-coming leaders to do the same. "Don't be afraid to listen and always allow others to provide input," Fleck says. As Lane says, "Listening will get you all the information that you need and knowledge to deal with the situation appropriately." Aimee Phipps takes the listening approach as well, but she also suggests an objective view: "Know when to interject and when to listen as well as not taking the rejection of ideas personally." Sampson also advises new leaders to have an open mind: "Many suggestions may seem far-fetched, but their proponents believe in their cause, and you just take steps backwards if you don't consider each opinion equally." John Juvenal says leaders should "take the opinions of others into consideration." Daniel Vogel takes the active approach: "The most important thing is to know your student body. You could be the most responsible person, but if you can't serve needy students, they won't follow you. Many times I go out and ask people how they feel about their needs as well as second-period representatives who can bring those ideas/concerns to

Most Valuable Lesson Learned



Tracy Taylor

"That whatever I do, I must take responsibility for it and to always remember that people are following me and repeating my actions."
—Tracy Taylor, senior

Cabinet as well as Parliament meetings."

Margitta Whitehead reminds students that leadership is an all-day job. "You're being looked at even when you think you're not, so be a leader at all times," she says. Jimmy Skiles simply says, "Keep a smile on your face."

Serving Students Better

So how do Buchholz leaders make sure that their organizations are serving students' needs? Phipps says it takes all types. "We have a broad array of students in Cabinet, and we frequently brainstorm together for activity ideas," she says. "We work with other clubs to ensure that everyone feels included and so all activities are the best they can be." Katie DeLuca and Karli Rowe say it's about organization. Rowe explains, "We...have not only a Student Council but a Parliament which is our way to communicate with a large group of the student body." DeLuca agrees, "We have monthly Parliament meetings in which Student Government meets with student body representatives. They express their needs, suggestions, criticisms, and compliments at those meetings."

Student Council members were excited and vocal about the ways their group has improved the quality of life for students on campus. They seem most proud of their pep rallies and Homecoming events. As Lauren Butts says, "We have organized school homecoming and spirit activities, incorporated student ideas into school functions."

What It Means To Be a Leader

"It means to set an example for people. A leader is a role model and a friend who is there for everyone who needs someone."
—Cally Orr, junior



Andrew Riggs

"Take responsibility even when things don't turn out how you expect them to. You're not too good to listen."
—Faydra Long, senior

"To set the example of what's right to others, think of yourself last, and consider everyone's ideas."
—Andrew Riggs, junior



Michelle Harris

Michelle Harris is proud of the fact that Buchholz has a reputation for all transfer students. Sampson explains how much leaders influence the outcome of school improvements. "By setting a unified, positive example, we promote school spirit," she says. "When the student body feels pride for their school, they are less likely to make problems, hence improving day-to-day activities."

To Be a Leader

Buchholz Student Council members have a common theme in their answers about what it means to be a leader: responsibility and respect, trustworthiness and time. "A leader takes the initiative to perform tasks without being asked and is someone that other students feel comfortable going to for help," Phipps says. Harris advocates readiness. "It means being responsible, trustworthy, and always ready for problems when they arise," she says. Juvenal reminds leaders that it's not always easy. "Take responsibility for things that occur whether they are good or bad," he says. "You have to realize that whatever you do, there are going to be people that like it and those who don't." Tara Bagen says that being a leader is about

service first and to be helpful to others and to provide an example for others to follow. Art Nagan reminds leaders to always listen.

Looking Up

So whom do the student leaders at Buchholz admire? Some have very specific answers. Butts admires



To Improve Student Life

"We always have an ear out for what the student body would like and try to cater to their needs by working hard at their different committees."

—Katie DeLuca, senior

Alachua County Sheriff Steve Oelrich. "He has overcome a lot of personal hardship," she says. Rowe says about state Sen. Rod Smith (D), "He's a superb legislator and has supported the juvenile justice system and rehabilitation." Jake Holland and Sampson both look to Rep. Karen Thurman (D) as "a strong female leader," according to Sampson. DeLuca says she looks up to Sen. Bob Graham

(D), partly because he's a Democrat. "He tries to improve the quality of life for those in poverty."

Florida's Future

These students look at different issues when asked what will most improve life in Florida in the future. Rowe says it will take education. "I believe that my generation will continue to attempt to improve Florida, and I think our education is the most fundamental ingredient to achieve this goal." DeLuca sees education in the future, too. "The increased availability of AP courses, PSAT, and on-line high school will all give kids a chance to take prep courses where they might otherwise not be offered."

Other students look to the environment to better Florida's future. Fleck says preserving the Everglades is the way. Orr says we must have "respect for nature. Florida's beautiful springs, beaches, and Everglades need to be conserved and protected." 🐾

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