

Volume 2 Issue 3
June 2017

A photograph of two men in white t-shirts and dark shorts working on the exterior of a wooden building. They are standing on red extension ladders. The man on the left is facing away from the camera, while the man on the right is looking towards it. The building has horizontal wooden siding, some of which is peeling. A window is visible between the two ladders. The sky is bright and overexposed.

NorAm

The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
Mission Frère-Advocacy Newsletter



NorAm

The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
Mission Frère - Advocacy Newsletter

The Mission of the *Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Mission Frère-Advocacy Program* is to create an awareness of and to advocate for the needs of those most marginalized in our society. Our goal is to create a more just, peaceful and equitable world by being faithful to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice. We foster presence, compassion and liberation in collaboration with the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province, the members of the Consortium of Edmund Rice Schools and all who are inspired by the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice in the North American Edmund Rice Network.

IN THIS ISSUE- JUNE 2017

COVER

Iona Prep students painting in New Orleans

1 FOUNDER'S DAY 2017

Schools and communities across the global Edmund Rice Network celebrate Edmund Rice's Feast Day by promoting solidarity and advocacy with our "neighbors."



2 SABER AT BISHOP HENDRICKEN

Bishop Hendricken High School students advocate for a group too often forgotten about in the United States, veterans of the Armed Forces.



3 THE MEN INSIDE

Students and faculty at the Palma School continue to stand in solidarity with and advocate for inmates at Soledad Prison in the Salinas Valley, CA.



4-5 LET GIRLS LEARN!

Bergen Catholic student Carlos Tejada, class of 2018, leads his peers in promoting women's education and its importance nationally and globally.



BERGEN CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL
Developing leaders in mind, body & spirit

6 BUILD KINDNESS, NOT WALLS

In conjunction with International Women's Day, Iona College student Tamara Abi-Mourshed reflects on the importance of promoting solidarity with those who have been affected by the rhetoric of our current political climate.



7 ADVOCACY WEEK @ IONA PREP

In conjunction with Founder's Day, student members of Campus Ministry and Iona Prep's Human Rights Club raise awareness of justice issues during Advocacy Week.



8 ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS AT ALL HALLOWS

Marist Brother Gerard Doherty educates students at All Hallows on the importance of being aware of and fighting against human trafficking.



9 ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT/ LINKS

10 UPCOMING EVENTS

FOUNDER'S DAY: ***CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND CONTINUING THE MISSION OF BLESSED EDMUND RICE***



On October 6, 1996, Pope John Paul II declared Edmund Rice to be "Blessed" at a ceremony in Rome. On May 5th each year, the Edmund Rice Network, including Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and communities, schools, and family members around the world celebrate Founder's Day, the feast day of Blessed Edmund Rice. This day not only celebrates the importance of Edmund Rice's life and ministry but also allows members of the Edmund Rice Global Network to promote solidarity amongst the more than 300 schools on six continents around the world.

This year, many Edmund Rice Schools across the world focused their Founder's Day on advocating for others in a variety of ways. Thanks to the efforts of the Edmund Rice Advocacy for Change (ERA) group at St. Mary's Grammar School in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the "I Am Your Neighbor Campaign" was born. This campaign asked Edmund Rice Schools from around the world to promote solidarity amongst schools, and to heed the call of Luke's Gospel in identifying, serving and advocating for our "neighbors" across the globe.

In the North American Province, Edmund Rice Schools celebrated Founder's Day in their own manner. A sampling of what took place follows: At Brother Rice High School in Michigan, the school community participated in a fast, serving a simple lunch



A hand from the "I Am Your Neighbor" campaign, where schools across the ER Global Network promoted advocating for our "neighbors" across the world.

at a low cost to promote solidarity for the hungry. The money students saved on lunch was donated to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit. At the Palma School in California, the school community raised funds for a school community member battling Leukemia. At Iona Prep in New York, the school held an Advocacy Week, in which students raised awareness of various global issues that the school advocated for throughout the year. The Advocacy week concluded with a prayer service on May 5th and a vow renewal of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother's living and working on campus. Iona College in New York also celebrated Founder's Day with a prayer service and vow renewal, as well as a lunch and the planting and dedicating of a tree on campus in promotion of Edmund Rice International and their efforts in promoting Care of Earth. Founder's Day continues to be an opportunity for ER Schools around the world to stand in solidarity with those marginalized in our society.

To view the "I Am Your Neighbor Campaign" video, please click here: [I AM YOUR NEIGHBOR](#)

SABER @ BISHOP HENDRICKEN

Bishop Hendricken's students continue to work for justice through their advocacy group, "SABER" (Student Advocates of Blessed Edmund Rice). During the 2017 school year, students have continued their fight to advocate for a too-often forgotten group in the United States: veterans of the armed services.



When it was founded last year, Bishop Hendricken's SABER group committed itself to advocating for others, particularly those who are marginalized in our society. It was evident early on that a group that fit this description in their home state of Rhode Island were veterans of the armed forces. Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, student members of SABER have helped to organize and promote a number of different events to bring awareness to and support the needs of veterans. In November, 2016, Bishop Hendricken teacher Bill Johnston organized a free pancake breakfast for veterans. The breakfast was organized to show support for veterans and to thank them for their service to our nation. The school collected donations at the event, which were used to send care packages to Hendricken alumni currently deployed overseas, as well as members of the National Guard.

To read more about this event, click the link below:

([WARWICK BEACON](#))

In April of 2017, in support of Operation Stand Down Rhode Island (OSDRI), an organization that works to help "veterans secure stable housing and employment as well as other assistance," the Hendricken SABER group organized a food collection to support veterans in need. Thanks to the leadership of sophomore student Damon Castiglio (pictured right) and the Hendricken SABER group, the school collected more than 26 boxes of food for Rhode Island veterans. In addition to collecting items and money for veterans, the SABER group works to raise awareness of various issues surrounding veterans, through the use of their Facebook page.

To learn more about Operation Stand Down Rhode Island click the link below:

([OPERATION STAND DOWN RI](#))



Bishop Hendricken sophomore Damon Castiglio partnered with Hendricken's SABER group to collect more than 26 boxes of food for local veterans.

THE MEN INSIDE

-Roger Rybkowski, The Palma School

For the third year, through the novels of Steinbeck, the Palma School has collaborated with inmates at the CDCR facility in Soledad. Spearheaded at Palma by Director of Campus Ministry Jim Micheletti and Mrs. Mia Mirassou, the program has touched the lives of inmates in the prison's Life C.Y.C.L.E. program in profound ways.

PALMA SCHOOL
KNOWLEDGE • SERVICE • LEADERSHIP



Jim Micheletti (left) and Mia Mirassou accept certificates of appreciation from members of Life C.Y.C.L.E. at CDCR facility in Soledad.

©2017 The Salinas Californian - Chelcey Adami

It's more than exploring the themes in John Steinbeck's novels. It is a connection to a community that gives the men inside hope. They find themselves in an unfamiliar world where people care about their opinions and take an interest in them as men. Students, parents and faculty members who participate in the program make the inmates feel valued, just by being present and engaging in the conversations.

Hope turns to inspiration for most in the program and prison officials verify that this interaction has had positive repercussions among the population. Inmates must earn their way into the Life C.Y.C.L.E. program and each spot is now coveted. Many of the participants feel compelled to write Mr. Micheletti. Some of their comments follow.

"A guy that went to board the day after me went home last Friday. I thought that could have been me, then I thought if it was me, I wouldn't have been able to participate in the next Palma event... I know that me being here is a part of God's plan. If I continue to look at every event in my life as a gift from God and his purpose, no matter what is going on, it brings joy, peace and community. God is good."

"On February 2nd, it was 25 years in prison for me, and it was also the day my oldest sister passed away. She had never been able to come visit me. For me and for many others, that is why the time we spend with you and those brave young men has been so precious and valuable."

"When I see the faith that you guys still have in us I'm filled with emotion and love and it strengthens me to not give up and continue in my self-help. I just want to say sorry for at one time in my life when I lived recklessly, causing so much pain and making this world a worse place. Thank you for your grace, mercy and compassion."

"I myself have been incarcerated for 26 years, since the age of 18, and have never come across a person who is more committed to the betterment of humanity and flat out willing to go that extra mile to invest in people and allow them to see their own potential. I have many successful and inspiring stories/testimonies where Mr. Micheletti has had a direct impact on the men/Life C.Y.C.L.E. program. Mr. Micheletti has added value to well over 100 men inside these walls by just being himself and being the perfect example of humility and being of service and in service to others. I personally have been impacted by Mr. Micheletti from his approach to inspire us not only to change but to strive for transformation and live a life of service and to reach our highest potential."

"This was a wonderful experience for me to interact with society, sharing, reading the book Of Mice and Men. I learned a lot and will carry those lessons with me for life. The kids were smart and I had no problem learning from them. Their speech was honest and they were innocent. I just felt like showing them that not all people in prison are hopelessly lost."

Through campus ministry, the Palma community continues to make a difference in the lives of many in the Salinas Valley and Central Coast. These programs are borne of and embody the true essence of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother education.

LET GIRLS LEARN



**BERGEN CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**
Developing leaders in mind, body & spirit.

Written by: Carlos Tejada, Bergen Catholic, Class of 2018

Gender equality is essential for a nation to blossom into an economically and socially sound nation. I created and founded the club, *Let Girls Learn*, because I saw an opportunity to make a difference in not only the lives of young girls around the world, but also in the very halls of Bergen Catholic High School. My family instilled in me the importance of gender equality. My grandmother constantly reminds me, “Tú no eres mejor que nadie, pero nadie es mejor que usted.” My grandmother's saying is loosely translated to: you are not better than anyone, however, no one is better than you. Every human bleeds the same color, we are born, and eventually, we die. We all go through the stages of life. Therefore, equality should be treated in the same fashion.

Now, what is *Let Girls Learn* and what do we do in Bergen Catholic? *Let Girls Learn* was an initiative founded by former First Lady Michelle Obama. Its goal was to raise awareness and money to educate young girls around the world, specifically in third world countries, such as Morocco, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Thailand, Ethiopia, and more. Unfortunately, the current president Donald Trump has cut all funds that go towards the organization. This act did not stop me from achieving my ultimate goal. I hope to get people interested in the cause so they become involved by donating money and spreading awareness.

Our club will now partner with the Malala Fund to raise money and awareness for young Muslim girls, around the world, to receive an education to pull themselves and their families out of poverty. Society fails to see the importance of the female in the workforce. It is statistically proven that the economy of a nation rises dramatically if its women play an essential role in the workforce. My mother, Anna María Tejada, is an example of the ideal woman in the workforce. She is a partner in her firm and is mother to three children. She successfully manages the daily tasks that are thrown at her. This level of perseverance and determination is seen in many women, which is why it is vital girls have access to a proper education.



Members of Bergen Catholic's Let Girls Learn Club, founded by student Carlos Tejada, pictured with guests who participated in Bergen's first "Empowering Women Through Education" event. Pictured along side the young men from Bergen Catholic: Anna Maria Tejada is a Partner with Kaufman, Dolowich & Voluck, LLP and Director of the Employment and Labor Group in the New Jersey Office; Lillian A. Plata is a Partner with McManimon, Scotland & Baumann, LLC; Julia A. López, is an Associate with Reed Smith LLP, Jacqueline S. Peña is an Attorney with Travelers Insurance, and Cristal Reyes is Legal Counsel for Bed Bath and Beyond.

LET GIRLS LEARN

Written by: Carlos Tejada, Bergen Catholic, Class of 2018



**BERGEN CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**
Developing leaders in mind, body & spirit.

(continued from previous page)

On Thursday, May 4, 2017 *Let Girls Learn* club hosted its first “Empowering Women Through Education” event. Here, we invited renowned Latina attorneys to speak to the young men of Bergen Catholic about the importance of education and how it changed their lives and those of their families, the role women play in the workforce and the hardships they continue to overcome in their professional and personal life despite their successes. The following panelists participated in the annual event: Anna María Tejada, Lillian A. Plata, Julia A. López, Jacqueline S. Peña, and Cristal Reyes. They emphasized that men should serve as a joint voice with women to ensure equality of women’s rights in the workplace for the simple fact that it would put families in a better position and would elevate the global power and authority of this country. They highlighted how the United States of America serves as the example of democracy internationally and should be in the forefront of completing the unfinished business of women’s rights in the 21st century; thus laying the foundation for completing the mission of the *Let Girls Learn* initiative of educating the 62 million girls who are not in school across the world.

I interviewed the original members of Bergen’s *Let Girls Learn* club and discussed their reaction to this presentation along with why they decided to join this club. Among the responses I received, I discovered a common theme in their answers. When my peers joined *Let Girls Learn*, they were unsure as to what they were getting themselves into. After the first meeting; however, they developed a strong affinity for the club and its purpose. They agreed that gender should not determine the level of one’s success. Furthermore, they agreed that by teaching both men and women at the same level, global issues can be solved at a greater rate. I asked them for their feedback on the newly established annual event: “Empowering Women Through Education”. My peers greatly appreciated the fact that the five female attorneys went out of their way to speak to the young men of Bergen Catholic. Many could relate to what the women spoke about with their own mothers and female figures and their lives. These strong, independent, and successful women were the living proof, for these young men, that women can be just as successful, if not more, as men. Having an open and ongoing discussion will encourage young men to also be part of this very important dialogue to ensure that women in the United States and globally deserve the same rights and access to opportunity and compensation that men have in society.

Our country is built on the foundation “*that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*” (The Declaration of Independence). This quote has been part of our American history for two hundred forty-one years now. Yet, we fail to implement and recognize this right to everyone. I created and founded this club to wake up society and remind them that our work towards equality is far from done.

This article’s author, Carlos Tejada, is a member of Bergen Catholic’s Class of 2018 and was a participant in the 2016 ACTION Workshop in Jacksonville, Florida.

To learn more about the national organization Let Girls Learn, and the Malala Fund, please click below:

[Let Girls Learn](#)

[Malala Fund](#)

"Build Kindness, Not Walls"



-Tamara Abi-Mourshed, Iona College Student Leader Alliance of Multiculturalism

"**Build Kindness, Not Walls: Posters for Peace**" was an event initiated by Student Leader Alliance of Multiculturalism that was held on March 8, 2017 that coincided with "*International Women's Day: A Day without a Woman*". The event stemmed from the ostracizing events and hateful energy spewed from the media before, during, and after the electoral election. Our goal was inspired by the charism and serenity of Blessed Edmund Rice and our Christian Brothers institution that emphasizes advocacy, justice and service. We, **SLAM**, wanted to make sure our voice was being heard and our messages of solidarity was reaching those affected in our community.

Our event was an interactive event which allowed those on campus to participate in creating a poster that entailed words of kindness, empowerment, and unity to combat any negativity that we, as a community and society, have been, and are continuing to face. The posters made were to advocate for peace, equality, and justice. Terms that are often used when thinking about America as "land of the free", however those terms have been corrupted by the constant lack of empathy that people have fostered. The event did not *just* coincide with "International Women's Day", but we incorporated the value of that inspirational day into our event. Our advisor provided postcards that she received while actively participating in the Women's March. The movement was created for women and equality for all fueled our initial event. Postcards were written out by all participants during the event. Members of the community expressed their local, national, and personal concerns. The postcards were sent to the senator of New York after being signed with each participants' name and signature in an effort to emphasize their own personal story.



Iona College students and staff at the March 8th Build Kindness, Not Walls event

My own name stems from history upon history of struggle: Tamara Tamer Abi-Mourshed. I was named after my father, attached with the pride our family name holds. My first name: Tamara (palm tree), after my father: Tamer (dates that grow on palm trees), our last name: Abi-Mourshed which hold generations of our family lineage ranging from Syria and Lebanon. From the hundreds of us, my family of me plus four, are the only ones who reside in America. My father sought out to the "Land of the Free" after witnessing the many wars and invasions attacking our home lands. The urge for a fresh start and the will to repair all broken dreams to foster within his children. I continue to speak for the two countries where the heart of my own family is. Living in America and have only visited Lebanon and Syria twice has not discouraged any of my efforts to attempt to have a voice. I miss the days when I would search up "Facts about Syria" for a project about ethnicity in school and everything that came up would be positive: our nation's flower: Jasmine, shared customs and values, pictures of vast land and beauty; now, all that arises is "terrorism, horror, corrupt regime, innocent lives lost". With all the negativity forced around us, my peers and I continue to advocate and spread as much positivity and love we can. Each of my peers have their own personal stories and all our stories have encouraged our voice and future movements we are determined to accomplish.

"I love when people that have been put to flames run out carrying water for those who created the fire" (Stephanie Sparkles). The fire in our souls have been lit for ages, we will continue to advocate in the most effective and positive way possible. Our goal is peace, acceptance, and understanding. Our efforts will not remain unheard, we strive to put out the dangerous flames consuming innocent people. We stand together for those who have been forced down.

ADVOCACY WEEK AT IONA PREP



In conjunction with the May 5th celebration of Founder's Day, Blessed Edmund Rice's Feast Day, student members of Campus Ministry and the Human Rights Club at Iona Prep organized an Advocacy Week. This week highlighted the various initiatives and issues that Iona Prep students were involved in during the 2017 school year, culminating with a Founder's Day prayer service celebrating the work of Iona Prep students and The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers.



Iona Prep Human Rights Club members Noah Darden (rear left), and Allen Raja work on raising awareness of Children's Rights during Iona Prep's 2017 Advocacy Week



Iona Prep Human Rights Club member Kyle Vidal raising awareness on the topic of world hunger during Iona Prep's 2017 Advocacy Week

To find out more about Advocacy Week at Iona Prep, and to see more images and videos from the week, please click on the link below:

[Iona Prep Advocacy Week 2017](#)

To find out more about Iona Prep's Human Rights Club, please click on the link below:

[Iona Prep Human Rights Club](#)

ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS AT ALL HALLOWS

-Brother Jim Hamilton, CFC, All Hallows



On Thursday, April 6, Br. Gerard Doherty, a Marist brother from Mount St. Michael High School in the Bronx, visited All Hallows and spoke with the senior class about human trafficking. The presentation was part of the Senior Religious Studies class on Social Justice. Brother Jerry is the Director of Guidance at Mount Saint Michael, but he is also a member of the Coalition for Religious, a New York based group of Catholic religious brothers, religious sisters and others, who seek to promote advocacy of various social justice challenges.



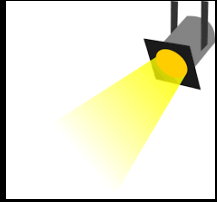
Brother Jerry Doherty, FMS addresses students at All Hallows in April during his presentation on human trafficking



All Hallows Senior Chriss Agramonte thanks Brother Jerry after his presentation on human trafficking

Br. Jerry reminded the 133 seniors that “My purpose is not to make you feel guilty or ashamed, but to learn something so that you’re aware of human trafficking.” Brother presented much information and many statistics that emphasized the depth of human trafficking and the urgency to address this problem. Senior Mario Ynfante stated, “It was astonishing to see and hear the facts about human trafficking.” Senior Kazon Robinson added, “People should never have to belong to someone. People should be able to live free and without risk of being less than human.” Senior Adrian Mercedes remarked, “I was not aware of the different categories of human trafficking. This talk truly expanded my knowledge of this topic and I want to collaborate to end this tragedy that affects millions of defenseless people.”

Br. Jerry entertained some excellent questions from the seniors as there was a genuine interest to continue the discussion about human trafficking. Even though the All Hallows seniors will be graduating soon, the hope is that they will take with them an enthusiasm to end this human tragedy. The goal for the remaining student body members and for All Hallows is to continue to understand this topic and to develop methods of advocacy for the victims and for the termination of human trafficking.



ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:

Teaching the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)
-International Presentation Association



As climate change and environmental issues continue to affect and marginalize peoples across the world, it is ever important to educate the Edmund Rice School Network on the importance of these issues, and how we must advocate for changes in the way we care for the earth. Brother Kevin Cawley (Edmund Rice International) has shared a resource that comes from the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and comes out of their work at the United Nations. The link below is a fantastic resource for educating ourselves and teaching others about the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals. It is our hope that you can use this resource to share with your students, families and communities to convey the importance of reducing our impact on the environment in the 21st century and beyond.

[UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS](#)

ADVOCACY LINKS



Edmund Rice School Network

This is a link to the School Network, which comprises schools from the ERCBNA Province and the Latin American Region. This link contains information regarding schools and the various programs and activities in which the Office of Educational Services (OES) is involved.

[EDMUND RICE SCHOOLS](#)



Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM): Justice and Peace Alerts

An association of the leadership of men in religious and apostolic institutes in the U.S. The link below is to the CMSM publication "Justice Alert," which highlights areas where justice is needed and proposes direct action through advocacy. The ERCBNA Province is a member of CMSM.

[CMSM ALERTS](#)



Edmund Rice International (ERI): Click below to access the most recent issues of Edmund Rice International's newsletter. This newsletter highlights the various areas of advocacy that ERI is involved in at the U.N. and beyond. Mission Frère-Advocacy works in concert with ERI.

[ERI NEWSLETTER](#)



Carbon Rangers: An e-newsletter published by Bro. Kevin Cawley, CFC, ERI Team and Executive Director of the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue at Iona College. Carbon Rangers creates awareness for climate change and advocates for responsible environmental stewardship.

[CARBON RANGERS](#)



Edmund Rice Latin America (LATAM):

The link below is to LATAM, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers' Newsletter in Latin America. The Latin American Region and North American Province work closely together to promote justice in the Americas. Click below to see the great work being done in Latin America.

[LATAM](#)



Smart Justice Network of Canada:

Brother Michael Maher works with this organization to bring awareness to the criminal justice system. Brother Maher and his colleagues advocate for both offenders and victims through Restorative Justice, which advocates for the criminal justice system to address the harm(s) done through mechanisms of support, accountability and healing. Click below to learn more:

[SMART JUSTICE](#)



Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders:

EREBB advocates for the rights of children to receive quality Catholic school education and brings together Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools from around the world. Click below to access their website:

[EDMUND RICE BEYOND BORDERS](#)

CONTACT US

We are always looking for submissions and links from across the network and beyond!



Sean D'Alfonso
ERCBNA Advocacy Coordinator
NorAm Editor

spd@cbinstitute.org



www.ercbna.org

UPCOMING EVENTS



July 5-11, 2017

Inaugural Mission Frère-Haiti Immersion Trip, Cap Haitien, Haiti



September 19, 2017, 12:00 PM- Mulcahy Gym, Iona College

Iona College welcomes Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, Founder of Homeboy Industries, as the inaugural speaker for the Br. Cornelia lecture. All are welcome!



September 21-24, 2017

ACTION Student Leadership Workshop, Jacksonville, Florida