

News Release

Everett Public Schools
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Everett High School familiar with Oprah's program topic

Although Oprah won't be mentioning Everett High School's Challenge Day on her program this week, students and staff at Everett High School have first hand knowledge of the event she will profile on Thursday, November 9 at 4 p.m. on KING-TV and again at 9 p.m. the same night on KONG-TV.

The television diva, known for her good causes and for bringing public attention to programs that make a difference, will air a segment about the powerfully positive changes following students' experiences during a Challenge Day at school. Everett High School has held Challenge Day events for the last two years and is gearing up for another one in May.

Senior, Alyssa Flaherty, has noticed a difference since she participated in Challenge Day last spring. "I definitely see that people are going outside their comfort zone to work together with different types of people. I can see that because of there will eventually be no boundaries dividing students."

Ali Hussein, who moved to Everett from Kenya three years ago, has attended three Challenge Day events. Challenge Day gave Ali a chance to learn about the diverse individuals in our community. "Challenge Day helped me understand other people, and it helped other people to understand me."

Challenge Day was started in 1987 by Yvonne and Rich Dutra St. John. The couple was motivated by memories of their own teen experiences and wanted to instill positive change in the world. The resulting day-long program has won awards, recognition and the endorsement of the Juvenile Justice System, the D.A.R.E. Officers Association, government officials, and many school districts and cities nationwide. School administrators, staff, students, and parents testify to the after effects of a Challenge Day, citing reduced teen drug, alcohol and tobacco use, less student absenteeism, and fewer instances of teasing and violence in middle schools and high schools.

"Students learn how to tear down the walls of separation, and they gain inspiration to live, study and work in an encouraging environment of acceptance, love and respect," said Principal Catherine Matthews, quoting from the program's description at www.challengeday.org.

Kelly Clapp, who organizes Challenge Day at Everett High School says, Challenge Day has empowered students to figure out ways to take charge of improving school climate so that all students feel safe and respected. Challenge Day is one of the ways that we are making Everett High School the School of Champions for ALL kids.

Matthews and her students and staff were excited to learn that Oprah is a Challenge Day fan. "Challenge Day is hugely beneficial to this school and its students and to our school community. It also costs to bring in Challenge Day leaders and to pay for substitutes for the teachers who are out of their classrooms to be fully involved in the day with students."

"We know how powerful Oprah is in spreading the word about amazing programs. We hope that Everett community members will watch her program, get fired-up about how good it is and help us produce more such days for students," said Heather Burglund, mathematics teacher at EHS. Following the spring Challenge Day at Everett High School, Burglund wrote a note of thanks to the Challenge Day organization saying, The kid who is always late to class, is disrespectful toward me, sharpens a pencil while I am talking, dresses in a way that is different than most, has different religious beliefs, or is a different race/ethnicity â€ has much more in common with me than I ever knew. Everett High is a great place to be â€ and it is only going to get better!

The school is distributing fliers to anyone who will take one, noting that in Snohomish County, \$50 could be spent on two family-sized pizzas or tickets for a family trip to the movies. But that same \$50 would also pay for one student to attend Challenge Day.

"Fifty dollars could have hundreds of dollars return on investment when one considers the cost of negative attitudes, poor attendance, distrust, drugs, and misbehavior that can be prevented with Challenge Day," Catherine Matthews said as a reminder to those who might question the value of the donation. This is truly a chance to change a student's life. I can't think of

a better way to spend \$50.

Donation checks should be made payable to Everett High School with Challenge Day on the memo line and mailed to Everett High School, 2416 Colby Ave, Everett WA 98201.