

# Campus Ministry

"Caritas Christi"

## Four SM Eagles Fly to Washington DC with Next Step

By Samantha Toth

You have probably heard about Next Step, but have you heard that three SM students were chosen to travel to Washington DC for Next Step? Next Step is a program offered through SM that organizes groups of our students to go to middle schools, such as St. John's, to talk about drugs.

Every year CADCA (community anti-drug coalition of America) hosts a week convention in DC. This year happens to be the 18<sup>th</sup> annual convention, and its theme is "Sustaining Success". Over 5,000 communities were represented at this event and more than 1,000 students were present. During this week, individual conferences and workshops were offered. The workshops were meant for the students, while the conferences were meant for the adults. However, the group from Orange County attended both.

The three students from SMCHS that were invited to attend this prestigious event were junior David Mittlestein, senior Jenny Norman, and senior Joel Muetting. Through their applications, these SM students were chosen to travel to Washington DC. In

addition to these three, eight other students were selected from other schools in the area; such as University High School, La Quinta, Santa Fe, and Tesoro.

The students did not travel to the other side of the country by themselves. Two deputies, Scott Wuen and Bart Epley, and the head of the organization, Marilyn Maccougal, known as Drug Use Is Life Abuse, toured with the eleven students.

This group of fourteen individuals left out of the Long Beach Airport on Sunday, February 10, 2008 at 7:00

a.m. When they arrived in Washington DC, they checked into the Renaissance Hotel and hit the sack.

The following day, Monday the 11<sup>th</sup>, was Community Prevention Day. At nine a.m., there was a workshop called Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free. However, the entire group was not required to attend this specific work-

shop or any workshop in general. Instead the students were allowed to choose which workshop or conference they wanted to listen to based on what interested them the most, which made this experience that much more exciting. At one

Mueting says, "You meet a lot of diverse people, which is great because it leads to networking in the future."

Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup> was Capitol Hill Day. Here some of the students traveled to Capitol Hill to protest under age drinking and the government's inability to look

House."



The OC invades DC through attendance at the 18th annual convention on behalf of the CADCA Photo courtesy of Stephanie Plese



SM students, David Mittlestein, Jenny Norman, and Joel Muetting in front of the White House during their time in Washington DC with Next Step Photo courtesy of Stephanie Plese

workshop, David Mittlestein says that, "A doctor was lecturing about mixing energy drinks with alcohol and how it stimulates the brain activity. He also spoke about a person being bipolar and doing drugs or alcohol and how that can affect the person's personality dramatically." Throughout the day, there were many other workshops and conferences that the students attended. Our eagles also attended a Meet and Greet, where they had the opportunity to meet many other students from around the country. Joel

at drug use more carefully. But before they exercised their right to freedom of speech, the students attended a workshop that easily conveyed the reasoning as to why and what exactly they were fighting for. For first timers, on Tuesday there was a "first timer's breakfast". This was comprised of students who had never traveled to DC to attend this convention before. Tuesday was also a touring day for the OC group. Jenny Norman comments, "It was nice to see the Capital, Congress, and the White

An appealing conference entitled "National Leadership Preliminary Conference" was offered on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> in which how adults need to take charge in the community was discussed. This portion of the conference was geared more towards the adults in attendance but the OC group of fourteen attended this conference anyway. Joel Mueting says, "There was a huge difference between the conferences and the workshops. By hearing both, you could see the two perspectives on the whole problem with drugs." For the youth, Wednesday offered a workshop called Taking it to the Streets which talked about

stepping outside your comfort zone. In addition to these two conferences there was one entitled Federal Town Hall Meeting, where the adults talked about ideas on how to eliminate drugs. Wednesday night wrapped up with a casual dance from

eight to eleven p.m. for the students.

The final day in DC was Valentine's Day. The students ate breakfast during the morning and attended the final conferences, which was a special privilege seeing as they were to depart later that day. The group of fourteen left Washington DC at 2:15 p.m. to return to the OC.

To describe this once in a lifetime experience one of our OC representatives stated, "It was very educational. It was very inspirational learning about the problems people have with drugs. Attending the workshops helped me realize that drugs are used by the most common and everyday people. It was very exhausting having to put your 100% attention and focus into the workshops/conferences every day, but it was so worth it!"

So for those of you who think this is something you wish to attend grab your sunscreen and sunglasses because next year the conference will be much closer to home in Palm Springs, California.

If you would like to learn more about Next Step, you can visit Ms. Hanley in room G131 to earn service hours and/or be apart of the program.



SM eagles check out some national monuments while in Washington DC for the prestigious Next Step convention Photo courtesy of Stephanie Plese