

SCHOOL

• CONTINUED from FRONT PAGE

students from the entire Jewish community.

The school's general studies program will offer language arts (includes reading, writing, grammar, spelling and handwriting), mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, computer use and physical education. The Jewish curriculum will be based on daily prayer, Torah study and studies on Jewish practices and holidays and the history of the Jewish people and Israel.

"Our program endeavors to make customs and traditions an integral part of students' everyday life through three modes of communication: oral, written and

visual," Academy organizers say in a brochure. "We strive to bring Jewish culture and its heritage to life. Stories, music and dances instill positive feelings for Judaism in the student and enrich the curriculum."

Cicco said daily classes would spend about two-thirds of the time on general studies and one-third on Jewish subjects. He said two teachers from the PCJDS had been hired and a third teacher is being sought.

The Jewish Federation of Pinellas & Pasco Counties is supporting efforts to organize the Academy and has information about the school on its website: www.jewishpinellas.org. "It is crucial that we have a Jewish day school in this area and this is

the first step," Federation Executive Director Bonnie Friedman said.

Cicco said the Academy hoped to add more grades in its second year and might seek to become a charter school, which would mean the cost of general studies classes would be paid for by the state of Florida. If that happened, tuition could be significantly reduced, he said.

Other committee members are Rabbis David Weizman and Danielle Upbin of Congregation Beth Shalom, Helen Freid, Michael Igel and Louis Orloff.



Congregation Beth Shalom is located at 1325 South Belcher Road, Clearwater. Cicco can be contacted at (727) 510-4291 or by email at robbycicco@cs.com.

Local Jewish group heads to school to promote healthy teen relationships

By ELAINE MARKOWITZ
Jewish Press

The Jewish Alliance to End Domestic Abuse (JAEDA) is on a mission to change the erroneous perceptions of some teenagers as to the nature of a healthy relationship between boys and girls.

Locally, the group is carrying their message right into the schools.

JAEDA's concern is that watching poor role models has led many teens to control girls rather than respect them, to verbally abuse them rather than show them kindness, and to view women as people who need to be, as one young man said, "kept in their place."

Tarpon Springs High School was the first in the Tampa Bay area to welcome the JAEDA program, but the organization has plans to add at least one more school in the fall.

"So many young women don't even realize they are experiencing abuse," said Ellen Woll, JAEDA chair. "They think this is the way life is."

She gave as examples a young man who might text his girlfriend 50 or more times a day to keep tabs on her, or young men making off-the-cuff remarks that are demeaning to girls.

Woll said JAEDA, a cooperative effort of a broad range of local groups, began about three years ago as an outgrowth of Jewish Women International's focus on domestic abuse and empowering women and girls to reject verbal or physical mistreatment.

"This year we (JWI) wanted to spread beyond the Jewish community and into the schools," said Deena Silver, a national board member.

In Pinellas County, "JAEDA helped make that possible," she said.

Local Jewish organizations that have come on board to support the alliance include the JWI Clearwater chapter; JCC Suncoast; Gulf Coast Family Services; the Clearwater, Lylah, North Pinellas, St. Petersburg and Yachad chapters of Hadassah and Jewish Federation of

Pinellas & Pasco Counties.

Local congregations and temples are also represented, including Congregation B'nai Israel, Congregation Beth Shalom, Temple Ahavat Shalom, Temple Beth-El and Temple B'nai Israel.

What is JAEDA doing to open eyes about abuse by teenagers?

For starters, JAEDA members meet with parents, teachers and school support teams, alerting them to the psychological, verbal or physical abuse practiced by many teens, as well as ways to halt that abuse.

JAEDA also has a professional on hand. Chad Herman of the Delta Project, initiated in 2001 by the Centers for Disease Control in order to prevent domestic and youthful violence, works with the students using a nationwide curriculum prepared by the JWI.

Individual schools select the grade level they wish to target; Tarpon Springs High School chose 10th grade boys.

Herman said he gave a general talk to about 100 young men and the school selected 10 of them for a series of six classes. Those students represented a cross section of ethnic backgrounds, including Greek, African-American and Latino.

"The kids were blown away," said Herman. "They had no idea they had options to behave differently than the way they'd been raised."

He said students claimed they had been taught to "show you're a man" in a relationship. Putting women down was one way to do that.

"Nobody teaches you what a healthy relationship is supposed to be like," said a tenth grader at Tarpon Springs High School. "We just watch our friends and parents and then do what we think is right."

JAEDA plans to extend its reach. In the works is a single three-hour session on dating abuse at the new JCC Suncoast North branch and a similar program geared to high school girls in the fall.

For information, write to jaeda1492@verizon.net, or call Woll at (703) 965-8818.

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