

Young Ambassador

CCH student tackles bullying after completing U.S. exchange program



Nardeen Wanis is seen here in this photo taken outside the White House in Washington, D.C.

(Windsor, Ontario, Aug. 17, 2017) – A three-week trip to Ottawa, New York and Washington has helped a Catholic Central High School student develop a new found sense of leadership as well as a greater resolve to help stamp out a persistent social problem which she says robs young people of their self esteem.

Nardeen Wanis, who enters Grade 12 this September at CCH, recently participated in the Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada, an exchange designed for Canadians to visit the U.S. with the ultimate goal of promoting mutual understanding, increasing leadership skills, and positioning youth to make a difference in their communities.

“It really got me outside of my comfort zone, which was great,” said Wanis, who returned to Windsor on Aug. 6.

The program – organized by The Center for the Study of Canada at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh – began with a three-day orientation in Ottawa, followed by two weeks in New York, and five days in Washington. Highlights of the trip included a visit to the U.S. embassy in Ottawa, as well as stops at the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, the Smithsonian and the U.S. Capitol building in Washington.

A special highlight in Washington included a visit to the U.S. Department of State, where students participated in a simulated debate on the international refugee crisis. Wanis got to represent the role of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

“It set us up in an incredible leadership position where we were able to see the work of world leaders from a different perspective,” she said.

Most of the time in Plattsburgh was devoted to learning about public service and community engagement projects. Students in the program are expected to work on a sustainable community service project that can be implemented in their home countries after completing the exchange.

As a result of going on the exchange – which is supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, and Fulbright Canada – Wanis wants to develop an anti-bullying campaign. Her goal is to create a short presentation on the subject that can be presented in elementary schools.

“I’ve had my own personal experience with bullying,” said the former Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Elementary School student.

Wanis said she came to the school in Grade 2. Her family’s first language is Assyrian, and because she spoke very little English when she started at OLPH, she said she was often ridiculed by other students, which had a detrimental impact on her self esteem.

“Instead of helping me, they bullied me for lacking that knowledge,” she said.

Now that she has developed some new leadership skills as a result of participating in the program, she’s eager to get moving on a project devoted to a subject that she’s passionate about.



Once her presentation is complete, she plans to contact teachers who may be interested in having her come in to their classes to talk with students about how they can put an end to bullying.

“I want these students to know that they can stand up for themselves,” she said. “Bullying just shouldn’t be tolerated in any way.”