

DAY OF
NATIONAL
CONCERN
ABOUT
YOUNG
PEOPLE
AND
GUN
VIOLENCE
AND
DISTRIBUTION
OF
STUDENT
PLEDGE

Student Pledge Against Gun Violence

ANYONE CONCERNED WITH GUN VIOLENCE CAN
HELP MAKE THIS OBSERVANCE A SUCCESS

What and when is it?

The Student Pledge Against Gun Violence calls for a national observance on October 17 and 18, 2006 that will give students throughout the country the chance to sign a voluntary promise that they will never carry a gun to school, will never resolve a personal problem or dispute with a gun, and will use their influence with their friends to keep them from resolving disputes with guns. The Days of Concern will empower young people to see themselves as part of a large national initiative and to realize that they really can reverse the tide of violence. If they sign the Pledge – and mean it – others will too.

How shall we observe this day?

Every student in the country, from middle school through high school, should be given a copy of the Pledge on October 17 or 18. Schools, families, and community groups such as churches and synagogues can enhance the effectiveness of the Days of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence by building towards it with discussions and activities that might include the following:

- Ask schools and community organizations to create awareness-raising activities for young people in the days leading up to the Pledge-signing. Students can design posters, write poems and song lyrics, or plant trees and flower bulbs in memory of young victims of gun violence and as a symbol of their commitment to a safer future. Teachers might invite an emergency room physician to speak about how it feels to operate on a gun-shot victim and lose that person; how it feels to inform parents of their loss;
- Churches and synagogues can talk to young people about the power of each individual's decisions and the opportunity for change that October 17 and 18 will offer. Adults can use the Pledge as a vehicle for letting young people know about our concern for them and our desire to see them grow up in safety;
- Convene panel discussions or forums with community organizations like the PTA, League of Women voters, NAACP, and churches and synagogues to discuss ways to implement the Pledge and reduce gun violence.
- Form a network of people who share your concerns and are interested in organizing events to protect children from gun violence.

- **CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER STUDENTS TO MODEL POSITIVE RESPONSES FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS.** If it is true that people learn best by teaching, we could reinforce the impact of the Pledge by asking older students to take the message to younger ones, both on October 17 and 18 and in the days and weeks following.

Some new books for younger children

Sherri Chesson's *The Gorp's Gift*, for pre-school and lower elementary grades, warns children in verse and child-friendly drawings to assume that any gun they see may be loaded and asks them to promise not to touch guns. Older students who have signed the Pledge could visit elementary school classrooms to discuss the decision they have made and to read Chesson's book to the younger children (Chesson's book can be ordered by calling 1-888-729-4677). A chapter book for older elementary and middle school students, Walter Dean Myer's Newberry honor award book, *Scorpions*, would provide excellent classroom discussion, either before or after the Day of Concern.

What happens to the Pledge after the student has signed it?

Some suggestions:

- Give each student two copies of the Pledge. As the student to keep one copy for himself/herself and to give the other to the most trusted adult in his or her life: a parent, a teacher, a minister or rabbi, an older sibling, a grandparents, a counselor. Ask the students to remember that they have signed a contract and made a promise; the older adult can remind them of that importance of that promise.
- Designate several students in each classroom to collect the Pledges and tally the numbers, without recording the names of the students. Have several students per school tally the totals for that school.
- **Totals should be reported to the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence: on our website at www.pledge.org, email to mlgrow@pledge.org, or by FAX to (507) 663-1207.**
- Celebrate the day with an all-school assembly. Invite special guests: an athlete who is a positive role model, a political figure that has shown special concern for young people, a community leader.

Organizations that have worked with or disseminated the Student Pledge include:

The American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, Council of the Great City Schools, the National School Boards Association, The National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Student Councils, The U.S. Attorney network, the National PTA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and many faith communities.

Website for more information.

Look for further information or add your own suggestions on the Pledge website: www.pledge.org.



**Oct. 17 and 18
2006**