

# Asper Foundation receives award

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## WHS, HCS among the many N.B. schools participating in the unique human rights program

**T**he Asper Foundation were recognized recently for its Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program.

On Oct. 25, the foundation president Gail Asper – daughter of the Asper Foundation founder, the late Izzy Asper – accepted the Pioneer of Human Rights Award during The Youth Forum at Margaret Norrie McCain Hall at Saint Thomas University.

“The Asper Foundation is involved in the lives of many students in New Brunswick,” said Gordon L. Porter, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. “The foundation is making a difference in allowing students to participate in a program that creates sensitization in tomorrow’s leaders. The human rights commission is proud to support this kind of awareness.”

The Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program aims to promote tolerance and sensitize Grade 9 students to the consequences of racism. The program started in Winnipeg, Man., in 1997, and it is inclusive of students from different backgrounds.

“Human rights awareness starts with youth,” said Porter. “This program gets them engaged in a forceful way. We are pleased that students from New Brunswick have been able to be part of it.”

Since 2001, 101 francophone and anglophone students and chaperones from Woodstock, Hartland, Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John and Stanley have participated in the program. The Asper Foundation has contributed more than \$100,000 to enable these students to participate.

“The Asper family has set a great example for us to follow, and we challenge others to step forward and join their pioneer efforts to advance human rights among youth,” Porter said.

The program allows students, as the leaders of tomorrow, to become more aware of human rights and world issues.

“This program is a benchmark for students and chaperones to establish their personal convictions to ensure that future generations will be unconditionally tolerant, understanding and respectful of all human rights,” said Porter.

Woodstock High School teacher Richard Blaquiere has been working



Gail Asper

with students involved in the Human Rights and Holocaust Program for several years. He takes them through the educational component of the program before they travel to Washington, D.C., which is the third part of the program.

“It’s not your typical trip for high school students,” Blaquiere said.

While in Washington, he said, the students visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as taking in other freedom-related landmarks such as the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

He said the educational component, which consists of eight or nine two-hour sessions, covers a variety of themes covering the history of the Holocaust, as well as a history of human rights in Canada.

Students are also required to put in 16 volunteer hours.

Hannah Steeves was one of the WHS Grade 9 students participating in last year’s program.

“It may seem like a lot of work but it’s really worth it,” she said.

During the youth forum in Fredericton, the Human Rights Commission announced the creation of a youth focus group composed of high school and college and university students, as well as teachers to develop and carry out a series of initiatives on human rights in New Brunswick.

The human rights commissions of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island will be invited to participate.

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