« Education for a Better World »

In the Summer of 2016 the program « Faces of the Heart » (FOH) was born, initiated by Luciana Jeler- a French Teacher at the Academy of the Sacred heart in Bloomfield Hills. It was the first international meeting of children from the Sacred Heart Association, with 27 students of 11 different nationalities coming together from 21 different schools within the network.

After the success of this first reunion, the team of the program’s initiators proposed another one. With the help of the Sacred Heart Heads of schools, FOH took to a bigger dimension in 2018. A maximum of 2 students were selected from each school, many of whom were sponsored by the school. This time around, there was a total of 47 students from 14 different nationalities and 27 schools, who reflected upon the theme « an education for a better world. »

Paris was the starting point of this program with guided visit of Hotel Biron and visitation of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat at Saint François-Xavier. Both locations are historically relevant to the history of the Order of the Sacred Heart.The students came together very quickly, and showed their ability to open up to others despite any language and cultural barriers. English was the primary language for work, but exchanges were also made in Spanish, German, French and Italian.

Following Paris, the students travelled to Joigny, where the community from the Barat Centre welcomed the group with kindness. The students had the chance to visit Madeleine Sophie Barat’s home and the surrounding town, an experience filled with emotions upon following the footsteps of our foundress.

In Nantes, Christophe Corda, principal of La Perverie school made the school’s facilities available to the students; the boarding house, the park, the cafeteria and study spaces. Many conferences, learning workshops, testimonies and films enabled the students to reflect. At the end of the stay, the four groups gave their final presentations. They learnt so much from each other, developed guidelines for future projects and were able to examine different points of view, outlooks and ways of acting.

Throughout the experience, workshops alternated with fun activities. In Paris, activities included a cruise on the river Seine, a tour of the city in a bus and the discovery of the Marais quarter. In Nantes, a trip was organised to Puy du Fou with its amazing evening show, « Les Machines de L’ile », outings for shopping as well as a scavenger hunt that enabled them to discover the city. All involved enjoyed the different aspects of this trip, which made a simple holiday camp stand out as both an educational and an enjoyable experience. F.O.H 2018 was a new success; the students were able to live « internationally » and create lasting friendships.

FOLLOW UP AND PROPOSALS

The success of this project which, without a doubt, is growing strongly, must lead us to reflect seriously the continuity and sustainability of the program.

* for two years the project has been carried out by volunteers (from both France and the USA) who take upon the task to prepare and lead the program. It is a year-long cycle, which requires consistent dedication. Being available to communicate and solve problems between schools and countries requires prompt reaction, and our volunteers made themselves available on afternoons, evenings or evenings
* Until now, the program has taken place in France (paris-joigny-nantes).
* The communication is unpredictable: in 2016 it was via the exchange coordinators, and in 2018 the principals brought their support.

Questions

* How do we plan for the future?

 Isn’t it time to think about setting it up as an institution?

* Why should Faces of the Heart be (come) a sustainable program?

 At the moment, where there are less and less religious people, isn’t it fantastic to see that the youth of the Sacred Heart is up for carrying on the legacy and educational work of Madeleine Sophie Barat; in their school, their town or even their country ?

We definitely have a few ideas on the subject, and, most importantly, a strong desire for this initiative to continue.

*Sabine du Vignaux*