



PRESS RELEASE

Aventura City of Excellence School
For Immediate Release

Date: September 21, 2009
Contact: Leslie Loewenthal Phone: 305-466-1499 ext. 4123
ACES Special Projects/Events

THE “ART” OF BUILDING COMMUNITY AND PEACE THROUGH CULTURE

AVENTURA, FLORIDA — September 21, 2009. Aventura City of Excellence School, (ACES) students spent weeks of preparation in anticipation of the annual International Peace Day event.

This year, Peace Day brought ACES students, families, city officials and community members together to focus on how art and culture build a sense of community and create a foundation for peace. The concept ties together ACES 2009 National Promising Practices Character Award for *The “ART” of Building Character* with the City of Aventura’s commitment to the arts with the opening of the new Aventura Arts Cultural Center, (AACC) next year.

For the event, students wrote thoughtful and powerful “Peace Day” essays and poetry. Student art was displayed throughout the school halls, garden and ceremony. Kindergarten classes made a giant wall puzzle of self made portraits of each Kindergarten student united together as an “essential piece” of the ACES community. The first grade classes made “Pinwheels for Peace” displayed in the garden walkway. The school-wide Good Samaritan Peace Day project collected over 550 gift boxes from ACES students filled with essential items to help needy children all over the world. The colorful gift boxes were displayed at the ceremony along with a banner by the Middle drama and art class.

Principal Julie Alm welcomed guests warmly and stated, “The arts unite our community and build a strong foundation for ethics. ACES won a 2009 National Promising Practices Award for the “Art of Building Character.” We provide students with cultural experiences such as; field trips, guest speakers, live theater, foreign language, art, music, drama, TV

Production, journalism and dance. Through these experiences students develop an appreciation for the arts and each other, which fosters a culture of peace.”

Vice Principal, Daniel Sandberg said, “ACES is a United Nations of sorts with a multi-cultural environment that represents students and families from over 22 countries, religions, and linguistic backgrounds speaking 19 different languages at home. Language is a bridge that connects cultures. While ACES students speak many languages, there is one word that brings everyone together and that word is peace.”

Keynote Speaker Kelley Shanley, CEO for the Broward Center for the Performing Arts discussed how culture and art inspire communities to celebrate diversity. Kelley said, “When we become familiar with customs and cultures that are different from our own, we invite curiosity, acceptance and peace. The arts help us to make these connections and to eliminate fear of the unknown.” Kelley’s strategic role in the dynamic growth of the Broward Center and its impact on community has earned it recognition as one of the top performing arts centers in the world. The Broward Center will serve as the managing partner for the new Aventura Arts and Cultural Center, (AACC).

Mayor Susan Gottlieb discussed how the AACC programs will build community involvement by embracing students, families and Aventura’s multi-cultural environment through the arts. In addition, ACES students will be able to use the new center for certain events, encouraging students to share their artistic expressions with even larger audiences that will make them feel like “real actors and actresses” on the stage.

A student Peace Day DVD presentation portrayed ACES students participating in a variety of art forms discussing how these expressions contribute to their well-being and to making the world a better place. Students shared that they practice peace by giving back to their community. They believe it’s better to express yourself in music and dance rather than with war and fighting. ACES students embrace the arts and utilize cultural experiences to reinforce values such as; peace, cooperation, responsibility, team-work, tolerance and unity. Staff member Brenda Daniels said, “At ACES we embrace diversity. That leads to peace and that’s why I like my job here so much.” At the end of the video, students thanked the City of Aventura for their commitment to the arts.

To the delight of the crowd and to end the inspiring Peace presentation Choral Director, Phillip Lakofsky led the Kindergarten Peace-Makers chorus in their rendition of “It’s a Small World.”

City Manager, Eric Soroka said, “The City of Aventura’s commitment to the arts in building the new AACC and ACES 2009 “The **ART**” of Building Character Award validates how the arts can unite a community while reinforcing values that make the world a better place.”

To see ACES Peace Day DVD please view at the City of Aventura TV Station.

**2009 National Character Award - Aventura City of Excellence School,
ACES Students Engage in the “ART” of Building Character**

The “ART” of Building Character Program immerses ACES students in character building, cultural experiences that provide students with role models for ethics. Purposeful cultural experiences are woven throughout the curriculum, in all subject areas, for all the grades by a central theme of integrating values. The goal of the

program is to give all students an opportunity to experience, appreciate, share, and express ACES 12 core values through the cultural arts. Administration and staff has determined purposeful experiences for each grade level and then prepare students for the upcoming events. Students get ready for the art form through discussions, class assignments, research, and by creating their own projects to share with their classes. Cultural experiences teach students important lessons on topics such as; diversity, conflict resolution, the law, government and the environment. Students are engaged as they develop specific approaches to deeds and actions. The “ART” of Building Character Program increases students’ enthusiasm and positively affects their moral development, behavior and confidence.

About ACES:

Aventura City of Excellence School (ACES), established in 2003, serves 932 students grades Kindergarten through the eighth grade as the first municipal-sponsored school in Miami-Dade County. ACES leads the way in "Educational Best Practices" focusing on "whole child" development and excelling academically. ACES has achieved an A status for the past five years ranking among the top high performing combination schools (i.e. Elementary and Middle School) in the state and in the district. ACES maintains a low student-teacher ratio, state of the art facilities, advanced technology, a safe environment for students to learn, Character Education and a variety of programs to meet the needs of all students including programs for Gifted Students, Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and English as a Second Language (ESOL). In addition, ACES curriculum offers even more choices for students and families including; Special Interest Clubs, Before and After School Care, After School Sports, Art and Drama Programs, Parenting Workshops, an Authors Series and a Middle School Leadership Speakers Series featuring leading entrepreneurs who discuss their career path and the values that lead to their success. ACES won the “Best Fairchild Garden” for two years, a State Innovation Award, and 11 State and National Awards for its Character Education Initiatives. For more information, visit ACES school Web Site at www.aventuracharter.org or call 305-466-1499.