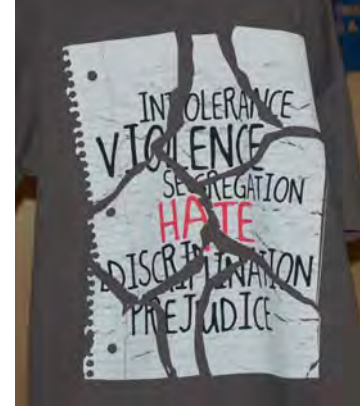


Walk In My Shoes BRIDGES Youth Conference

Purpose

Walk In My Shoes brings students from across Orange County together to explore issues of identity and culture, develop their leadership skills and be exposed to examples of successful youth activism. The goal is to empower and mobilize students to work towards creating positive social change. Again this year, in keeping with the overall direction of the BRIDGES School Inter-group Relations Program, an emphasis was placed on providing students with workshops that emphasized community organizing and opportunities to get involved in making a difference in their schools, communities and the world.



The Event



For the third successive year, the conference was held at UC Irvine and hosted by Daniel J. Dooros, Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Prior to the start of the day and during lunch, students were entertained by youth DJ-South. WIMS was emceed by OC Human Relations Youth Organizers Program (OCYO) members Andy Tovar (Loara High School) and Valerie Sandoval (Katella High School) who did an excellent job of emphasizing the message of youth empowerment. The opening session featured welcomes from Commission-Chair Bill Wood and Dr. Rameen A. Talesh, Assistant Vice Chancellor Students Affairs at UCI. The session ended with Youth Organizer Alexis Nava as the keynote speaker.

After the opening session, participants had a choice of attending over 20 different workshops offered in three successive time slots. As has been the case at the past few WIMS conferences, a number of the workshops were presented by OCYO members, college students and community educators. After their workshops, students enjoyed lunch and an energetic music set by DJ-South. Following lunch, approximately one-half the schools took their students on an optional tour of the UCI Campus. Students also had the opportunity to obtain a WIMS shirt in exchange for a small donation. The shirts were designed by a BRIDGES graduate.

Attendance

Over 550 students and educators from 28 Orange County Jr. High and High Schools, including two private schools, attended the conference. Despite budget woes, schools made it a priority to attend the annual conference. Almost 30 OCYO volunteers and two interns did a great job assisting with setup, registration, emceeing, lunch, hosting and presenting workshops. In addition, 8 Commissioners, Community Partners and guests attended. After consulting with a number of educators, the conference was again held on a Thursday. This change seemed to work well, and will be continued next year.



Funding

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Comments from the Conference

- *All my workshops were amazing!*
- *Very inspiring and made me want to do something*
- *WIMS has opened my eyes to many important issues*
- *I loved this conference and want to come back next year!!*
- *A great experience that I won't forget.*
- *It was the best school event I've ever been to!*
- *A great first-time experience! The workshops were attention-grabbing.*
- *I had so much fun and learned so much – thanks to everyone who made this happen.*
- *It exceeded all my expectations – well done!*
- *I got the point that bullying does happen & how it hurts individuals*
- *Teacher: "Workshops were extremely engaging, I would love to have them present at our school."*
- *Teacher: "Great conference for my students."*

