

YOUR VOICE

YOUR VOICE: SAVE students oppose violence



Laney High School senior Gabrielle "Gabby" Allen-Destroismaisons gives a presentation on "Stigma and Mental Illnesses" at the National SAVE Summit in March. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Students Against Violence Everywhere has been a major part of my life during my time at Laney High School. SAVE is a national nonprofit committed to engaging, empowering, educating and encouraging youth through meaningful service, crime prevention and conflict management activities. SAVE chapters exist in many forms such as afterschool clubs, community groups or entire schools.

I joined SAVE as a freshman who wanted to do something about the violence I had witnessed during middle school. At my first SAVE meeting, I was blown away by the students; they discussed serious issues without an adult leading every second of the conversation. I spent a significant amount of time during my first two years of high school in this environment, where my ideas about important issues were actually considered and executed in service projects.

As Laney High School SAVE president, I represent youth from Wilmington leading and participating in community and on-campus events. This school year, our chapter has been especially busy. We presented at Murrayville Elementary School's Anti-Bullying Celebration, read *Twenty Twinkling Stars* by Laurie Schloff (dedicated to the 20 Sandy Hook first-graders lost on Dec. 14, 2012) at Wrightsboro Elementary School, and volunteered at the Wrightsville Beach Out of the Darkness Walk to raise money and awareness for suicide prevention.

Recently, our chapter attended the National SAVE Summit. Chapters from across the country came together to share service project ideas, listen to powerful speakers and present at break-out sessions. With the help of my chapter, I gave a presentation entitled "Stigma and Mental Illnesses," which explored stigma against mental health. We showed our peers how to debunk myths through hands-on activities and critical thinking.

I also serve on SAVE's Youth Advisory Board to help guide the organization's mission to its more than 2,100 chapters in seven countries and 48 U.S. states.

I enjoy being a part of SAVE because I get to see the change that not only Laney's High School's SAVE chapter is making, but what SAVE is doing each and every day across the country! Learn more about SAVE at www.nationalsave.org.

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