

Panorama

Ladue Horton Watkins High School

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Organization gives four opportunity to tackle hard issues

Discussions, games and historic tours allow insight to achieving diversity

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After applying, interviewing and waiting, sophomore Ron Bronstein, and juniors Debbie Goldstein, Ben Solomon and Rachel Winston learned Jan. 3 they had become new members of Cultural Leadership, a program designed for Jewish and African American students seeking cultural awareness.

The program is a non-profit organization designed for sophomores and juniors in St. Louis interested in developing leadership skills, dispelling stereotypes, and raising

cultural awareness and understanding between Jewish and African-American cultures.

"I'm excited that I made it into the organization. I

decided to apply because there were promotions around the school for meetings. In addition, Student-to-Student, an out-of-school extracurricular activity which I'm involved in, sent e-mail and encouraged me to participate. Student to Student is run by the Jewish Community Relations Council and we teach Judaism to Christian kids at private schools," Solomon said.

Cultural Leadership involves 24 students from different schools throughout the St. Louis area, 12 African-American and 12 Jewish, with equal membership among males and females. A panel selects participants: their decision is based on an application, references, and interviews.

"It's a relief to learn that I made it into the program. First, we had to fill out a written application for the organization, and based on the application, they narrowed finalists to come for an interview. During winter break, we had to go for a 15-minute interview and then they called us up the next night and told us we were selected," Winston said.

Cultural Leadership began its 15-month

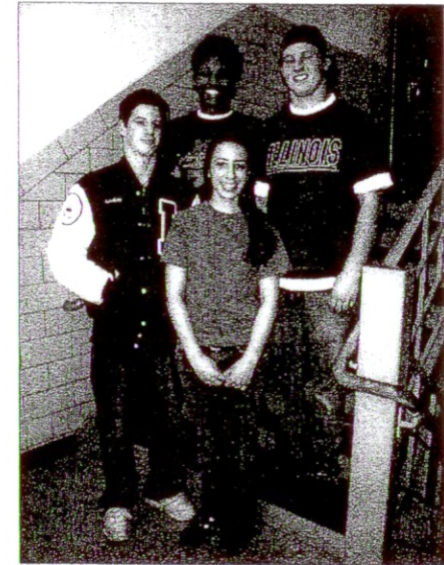
program Jan. 10 with a group meeting at the founder's house. The students met with other program members. In addition to discussing information on upcoming retreats and trips, participants will meet once a month to host group discussions and engage in games and activities that seek cultural understanding.

"Everyone in the program was very welcoming. We shook hands and talked about an upcoming weekend hotel retreat Jan. 14-16. The retreat is full of activities and is supposed to help all organization members bond together," Solomon said.

The major highlight of the organization is its three-week out-of-state trip in the summer. The students fly to New York and travel by bus to visit historical spots including Harlem, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Birmingham, and Mississippi.

Students will stay several days in each area and visit the Martin Luther King Memorial, in addition to the Holocaust and Civil Rights museums.

"The group will be a great experience for
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FANTASTIC FOUR • The four Ladue members of Cultural Leadership, (from top left) juniors Rachel Winston, Ben Solomon, Debbie Goldstein and sophomore Ron Bronstein pose on the stairs. (photo by Leah Winer)

Cultural Leadership.... (from p. 1)

both minority groups. Occasionally, on Saturdays, all members will attend synagogue no matter what religion they practice and occasionally on Sundays, all of the members will attend a predominately African-American Baptist Church," Solomon said.

When the students return, they will par-

ticipate in several fund raisers in support of their trip for the upcoming year.

The program was founded by Karen Kalish in 1993. She modeled Cultural Leadership after Operation Understanding, a leadership program established in 1985 in Washington D.C. and Philadelphia.

"I really look forward to the program.

Everyone is very friendly and seems down-to-earth. I hope I learn a lot about the struggles Jewish and African-American people face, including slavery, the Civil Rights Movement and the Holocaust," Winston said. "I think this organization will be a life-changing experience for me." ♦

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— junior Rachel Winston