



NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jessica Hawthorne
Office: 804-515-7950 / Cell: 804-495-1580
jhawthorne@inclusiveVA.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE STATE GAIN AWARENESS OF DIVERSITY & PREJUDICE AT CONNECTIONS INSTITUTE

Richmond, VA – In preparation for the 2019-2020 school year, nearly 60 high school students will spend a week at the Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Connections Institute exploring how to reduce bullying and prejudice. Sponsored by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, this program will prepare student delegates to work toward creating more inclusive school environments. Connections will take place from August 5 – August 9, 2019 at the W. E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center.

“Through the Connections Institute, students are able to better demonstrate understanding and appreciation for their classmates and neighbors,” says Jonathan Zur, President & CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. “For 26 summers, this program has met a significant need across our Commonwealth, particularly as schools work to reduce bullying and develop safe and supportive learning environments.”

Past Connections Institute participants have said that the program gave them a greater awareness of how others may experience prejudice in their daily lives, and also helped them develop new skills that they can use to work for important causes and issues. 97% of last years’ participants said that Connections gave them a better awareness of the hurt and pain some people feel as a result of stereotypical jokes, comments, and actions.

Thirteen schools and community groups are sending delegations of high school students to the 2019 Connections Institute. Students representing the following schools will be in attendance: Bayside High School (Virginia Beach), Collegiate School (Henrico County), Green Run High School (Virginia Beach), Indian River High School (Chesapeake) Newport News Public Schools, Ocean Lakes High School (Virginia Beach), Patrick Henry High School (Roanoke), St. Catherine’s School (Richmond), St. Christopher’s School (Richmond), Steward School (Henrico County), Tallwood High School (Virginia Beach), Thomas Jefferson High School (Richmond), and a select delegation of students who reside in the City of Richmond sponsored by the local Department of Justice Services. Funding support for the program is generously provided by the R.E.B. Foundation.

Interview Opportunities: Members of the press are invited to visit the Connections Institute during portions of the program. Most parents/guardians have granted permission to photograph and interview students. For interviews, the preferred visiting time is Friday, August 9 from 11:30am - 12:15pm. For programming, the preferred visiting times are Monday, August 5 from 7:30pm - 10:00pm or Thursday, August 8 from 7:15pm - 9:45pm. Other times can be arranged.

###

The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities works with schools, businesses, and communities to achieve success by addressing prejudices, in all forms, in order to improve academic achievement, increase workplace productivity, and enhance local trust. Through workshops, retreats, and customized programs that raise knowledge, motivation, and skills, VCIC develops leaders who work together to achieve success throughout the Commonwealth.