

## BASALT MIDDLE SCHOOL 2018-2019

BMS WEEKLY ENEWSLETTER-- March 17, 2019

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

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Dear Basalt Middle School Community,

Earlier this month, our eighth-grade students and their teachers were able to participate in a Skype with a holocaust survivor and author of *Facing the Lion: Memoirs of a Young Girl in Nazi Europe*, Simone Liebster. As a school, this has been a tradition for over ten years, through three different teachers taking the lead to make sure it continues to happen. Not only is this a real-life experience tied to one of the eighth-grade literacy units on persuasion, it is a chance of a lifetime for our students. Eighty-eight year-old Simone is from France and is a Jehovah's Witness. At the age of 11, Simone stood up for her beliefs and refused to sing Nazi songs or to salute Hitler as the savior of the chosen people and in turn she was put into a correctional facility to be re-educated. "This was not a time you couldn't face the Nazis," she said when she spoke to students last week. "There was constantly something that had to be done for the party. The whole time was cat and mouse, we being the mouse and they the cat. They were constantly after us." Both of her parents were put in Nazi camps, yet all of her family members survived and were reunited after the war.

The messages that Simone shared with our students were deeply meaningful and just as applicable today as they were in her youth. Here are some salient messages that Simone shared:

- Stand up for what you believe. Your yes is yes, your no is no. Be clear in your mind and stick to it. Sometimes a silent no is better than many words.
- When you grow, you come to the conclusion that things could be done better. It's the same as if you get a test back.
- Hope kept me going, solid hope that the good we do will be rewarded no matter when. The first reward is self-respect. This is priceless when you can say, "I have no regrets. No one has suffered because of me." This is all possible. As long as I am in peace and respect, I am in harmony.
- What do you want to do with your anger when it comes up? Are you going to be bitter or work against it? My mother taught me that we have to forgive and forgive with no retaliation. I had a hard time accepting that. I was only 15 at the time but my mother had the chance to retaliate against the person who had sent her to the Nazi camp and she did not do it. She didn't want to be responsible for anyone else's pain no matter what.
- You see good and bad all around you. Both cannot be right. You have to find which is right. Say no to what is bad but also do what is good. Saying no is not enough. Doing good is important too.
- Nature helps. It brings us not only food but joy.
- Don't follow something without knowing what it stands for. Ask yourself, will it bring love? Or create jealousy or opposition?
- We have to be careful what we choose. If you're bullied in school, do you bully back? No. Just face them strongly, stand up, don't pay them back. It was enough for the Nazis.

Knowing that Simone was an adolescent like many of our students during the time she was standing up to the Nazis is pretty incredible. What have we taught our children to stand up for? Are they able to speak up against unkind acts? How clear are they on their Yes and No and on what is right? Are we modeling the kind of response to anger that Simone learned from her mother? Teaching our children and modeling our own values for them is part of our responsibility, even in a time when it is harder and harder to sit down together as a family and have true conversation without distractions. I hope these encouraging words from Simone can prompt you to connect with your child about your values and stories from your past that illustrate for them how you have stood up for what you believed in during your own life.

Sincerely,

Principal Ellsperman