Spring is in the air, and at the Research Center we continue to make an impact in the community with our dedication to enhancing the lives of women and girls. We thank you for your continued support.

Rhonda M. Ware, Executive Director

The Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls generates and applies scholarly research, develops curricula, and conducts program evaluation and outreach for the purpose of supporting, transforming and inspiring initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls in the state of Wisconsin and beyond.

CHANGING BEHAVIOR, CHANGING LIVES
Anti-Bullying Behavior Curriculum: Changing Climate and Culture in our Schools by Identifying, Preventing, and Confronting Bullying Behavior
Author: Nancy Athanasiou, Ed.D.
Our curriculum assists educators who work with middle and high school students to understand and address issues created by bullying behavior in their schools and communities. Attention is given to those who bully and why, as well as to the victim—the characteristics of the victim and why s/he may not speak up. This curriculum also addresses the role of the bystander, and presents strategies that help students understand the various roles in bullying and how they can assist those who may be involved in a bullying incident.

A CONVERSATION WITH CURRICULUM COORDINATOR NANCY ATHANASIOU
What interested you about creating the anti-bullying behavior curriculum?
Nancy: I have always been an advocate for creating community in any learning environment, whether my middle school classroom in MPS or in classes I teach here at Alverno. I see community building as one way to prevent bullying and I wanted to not only share my experiences but give educators an opportunity to share theirs as well. It is my hope that the training and resources provided will help educators create a safe space so that they can teach all children in their care.

What impact would you like to see this curriculum have in our schools and communities?
Nancy: I would love to see a decrease in the incidence of bullying as reported not just by school data but by students themselves. Safe schools are places for children to flourish—academically, socially, and emotionally. Safe schools also have the opportunity to impact their communities in positive ways, and that ripple effect is important! Bullying is learned behavior and can be unlearned, but it requires that school personnel, families, and communities be willing to model civil discourse when problems arise. That is key in changing the behavior of children.

Why does this curriculum focus primarily on addressing bullying behavior in schools?
Nancy: First, it is where children spend the majority of their time during the day and where they encounter large- and small-group interactions on a daily basis. In addition, school is where students learn how to be part of a community and where they have an opportunity to practice the skills they need in order to be effective citizens. No learning takes place if a person feels unsafe—for that reason alone, all schools need to become every child’s safe zone. Improved academic performance may be one outcome; learning how to interact with others and be an effective citizen is another. Children can then take that knowledge with them into the community and model for others what caring, compassion, and empathy look like. The results could be amazing!

What makes the Research Center’s approach to identifying, preventing, and confronting bullying behavior different from that of other programs?
Nancy: Much of what I have seen in other programs only scratches the surface of this difficult issue. And too often they miss the mark by not including children in the conversation. In other words, there might be lessons for students to engage in but students are not always asked for their input about the problem that, truthfully, they are more aware of than most adults! The Research Center’s approach deals with both the proactive and reactive side of bullying, which is key, and it also involves students in some of the decision making when it comes to creating and maintaining safe learning communities.

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THE DIRECTOR’S CUT: A FEW WORDS FROM SLEEPOVERS DIRECTOR LAJ WAGHRAY ABOUT SLEEPOVERS AND THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

On February 20, the Research Center sponsored a screening of the documentary *Sleepovers* for an audience of nearly 200 in Alverno College’s Wehr Hall. The event was a huge success! In addition to the screening, the event featured a talkback with the film’s director, Laj Waghray, and three of the four young women featured in the documentary: Molly Corkins, Isabelle Koening, Suzanna Sellars. The audience included members of girl-serving organizations; Alverno students, alums, faculty, and staff; and community members. Ms. Waghray graciously shared some of her thoughts about the documentary, the *Sleepovers Discussion Guide*, and her experience working with the Research Center.

**Why did you create this documentary?**

**Laj:** The aim of this documentary is to share with girls the importance of finding their community and knowing that they are not alone. The challenges in the years from 12 to 21, real or imagined, can be difficult; a vital survival step is finding your friends to go through it with you. I want *Sleepovers* to help viewers really have a conversation—not a text, not a Facebook message, not an e-mail. I want to bring back conversation as one of the critical blocks of building relationships.

**Why did you want to create a discussion guide to accompany the documentary?**

**Laj:** To further the conversation. I have learned from life experience as a woman, sister, and mother that communication and conversation are the building blocks for strong bonds to exist. We need to know that we are not alone when we face challenges in life, which is something the documentary helps us realize. The discussion guide facilitates a dialogue and helps provide the tools to fulfill that goal.

**What made you approach the Research Center?**

**Laj:** I found the Research Center during research to build alliances with organizations that have similar goals to mine—empowering women and girls—and I was excited and hoped that a partnership would develop here. The Research Center’s stated mission is not just rhetoric; it works.

**What has your experience working with the Research Center been like?**

**Laj:** The Research Center has been so supportive and fully focused on the goal of creating a discussion guide for the film so it can benefit my target audience: girls. Research Center Executive Director Rhonda M. Ware and Special Projects Coordinator Desiree Pointer Mace have been professional and passionate about this important work.

**COMMUNITY BUZZ!**

Research Center Executive Director Rhonda M. Ware was a guest on TMJ4’s *The Morning Blend*. She shared information from the Research Center’s Teen Dating Violence: A Resource and Prevention Toolkit. To watch the full interview, please visit: http://www.themorningblend.com/videos/191432251.html.