



Embracing Diversity... Music to My Ears!

Submitted by: The Pope PTSA Committee on Diversity & Inclusion



Pope Greyhounds spoke with one voice on Wednesday night, August 25, 2010, to show their appreciation for a stellar musical performance in our own theater. The words and repeated standing ovations expressed more than the awe and admiration the crowd felt: it spoke also of friendships formed and bonds forged.

A group of 80 high school students performed magnificently, echoing the event's embrace of diversity with a wide range of musical genres -- from familiar classical compositions and beautiful international works to crowd-engaging American pop tunes. Ah, yes, did I mention that diversity rocks?!! A medley of Michael Jackson hits including "Thriller," followed by an ever-popular rendition of The Village People's "Y.M.C.A." tied up this gift of music with a crowd-pleasing set of interactive musical performances. The group's own "Michael Jackson" (performer) was an immediate hit with the crowd and acquired a following of fans. Undoubtedly, the many hours of practice and dedication were very apparent as the orchestra moved from one complex piece to another -- displaying energy, enthusiasm, precision, and skills usually seen only in more experienced or professional groups. And step aside, ASO, they've got you beat with their own signature dance moves, too.

To borrow from a couple of popular TV show titles we ask you, "So You Think America's Got Talent?" The neighbors who shared their talent with us were not merely from a couple of school districts away. Knocking our socks off was the highly-accomplished *Anjo Gakuen High School Wind Orchestra* from Anjo, Japan. This orchestra is known for its skilled performances in competitions and in concerts all over Japan and in other countries. In fact, they left our campus bound for Washington, D.C. where they will perform at an event in The United States Air Force Memorial Park. No doubt the "home crowd" there will delight as we did when they play *Stars and Stripes Forever*.

Notwithstanding the fantastic musical performances shared by the Anjo Gakuen band members, the highlight of their visit had to be the "homestay" experience. For a whirlwind two nights, the Japanese students were welcomed into the homes of Pope band students and families for the kind of cultural exchange only possible over the breakfast table and in line for brushing teeth. Language barriers were hurdled with laughter and smiles (and the help of on-line translators). The brevity of their stay was the only regrettable aspect of the experience. Pope Greyhounds showed their warmth and hospitality from beginning to end, and the result was a wonderful cultural exchange that spanned continents. Did I mention that Pope Greyhounds rock, too?!!

And whoever said that competition and diversity can breed animosity and enemies? Because of an acquaintance made at a band competition not long ago in Illinois, Pope band director, Gary Gribble and Anjo Gakuen band director, Kozo Yoshimi became friends; and Mr. Gribble invited the band to visit Pope High School the next time they were in the United States. That's how it's done, one handshake at a time.

What a great way to support Diversity and Inclusion! What does this mean to you? How can you support Diversity and Inclusion? Simply start by consciously working to understand people of different cultures, races and lifestyles. The next time you have an opportunity to engage in an exchange of diverse viewpoints and experiences, use your voice as a Pope Greyhound and **include** yourself.

Questions about Pope PTSA's Diversity & Inclusion Committee? Contact Charlene Noble at charlene.noble888@gmail.com