

# Jewish Journal

## ADL parent workshop targets prejudice

By SHANI McMANUS  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never harm me," goes the old childhood saying.

Is there truth in the maxim, or does the adage simply reflect a naive way of dealing with childhood bigotry and prejudice?

The Anti-Defamation League argues that hateful words and name-calling can be damaging to young children and often lead to lifelong prejudices. A recent study, according to the ADL, found that almost 50 percent of children had racial biases by age 6.

Research shows that when young children have

positive, interactive experiences as part of their regular environments, they not only develop an appreciation of themselves, but also an appreciation of people who are physically and culturally different, Andrew Rosenkrantz, ADL Florida regional director, said.

"I think prejudice and stereotypes are learned, and we can unlearn them," he said.

With the aim of teaching parents methods to stop the development of bias and prejudice, the ADL's World of Difference Institute sponsored a parent workshop at the Riviera Beach Resource Center on July 12, as part of its Miller Early Childhood Initiative.

Launched in 2000 and funded by the Quantum Foundation, the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County and a private donor, the objective of the Miller Early Childhood Initiative is to prevent the actions and beliefs that foster hate before they have a chance to take hold. The initiative works with educators and family members to encourage children to not only respect, but to embrace one another's differences, and to resist bigotry in all its forms.

"The goal of the workshops is to have an interactive experience of diversity and understanding that promotes relationships in communities,"



An Anti-Defamation League facilitator leads a parents' workshop on recognizing and combating bigotry and prejudice that took place July 12 at the Riviera Beach Resource Center. The workshop was sponsored in part by the ADL's World of Difference Institute's Miller Early Childhood Initiative. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Rosenkrantz said.

Participants in the

workshop develop an un-

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derstanding of anti-bias education and acquire the capacity to recognize and acknowledge prejudice and discriminatory behavior in themselves and others. They also develop and put into practice the skills to confront prejudice and discriminatory behavior, and create and sustain environments that respect

cultural differences, fairness and equity.

"I think [the program] works with every group of parents we can touch," Rosenkrantz said. "The more people we reach, the better we can make the world."

Audry Boyd, a preschool teacher and mother of five adult children, was among the more than one dozen parents who participated in the

Riviera Beach workshop.

"The workshop opened my mind to a lot of things I haven't thought about in a long time," she said. "I'll teach my preschool children to be more tolerant."

Boyd, a West Palm Beach resident, said she thinks there should be more such programs in the black community.

"Most of the time I'm around people of my own ethnic background," said

Boyd, who is black. "But we need to know how to interact with people from other cultures. When someone who isn't black comes into our neighborhood, we need to be more open and welcoming."

Although she taught her children, who are of mixed ethnic backgrounds, "to be proud of both their black and white heritage," her children experienced prejudice growing up.

"From the African-American side, they would be called 'cracker,'" she said. "From now on, if I see discrimination happen, I will speak up. If I see that ugly behavior, I will speak up. Sometimes we tolerate things, and we shouldn't. I'm going to try to stamp out as much bias as I can."

Jerome Moses, Riviera Beach Resource Center family advocate, said the workshop was well-received by the parents and that participants were given workshop booklets to take home to refer back to.

"We hope that the children will bring what they learn from their parents about bias and prejudice into their community when they grow up," he said. "All we can do is empower the people, and it's up to them to apply it."

For more information, call the Anti-Defamation League office in Boca Raton at 561-988-2900.