Students learn valuable lessons in life

EDITORIAL

Area schools are quite creative in coming up with projects to enhance their curriculum. Teachers often find stimulating ways to make the lessons they are trying to teach stick with their students, and those efforts tend to have lasting impacts on the students.

We hope one such project just concluded at Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights has that kind of effect on the participating students. Art, theater and English students at the school created a presentation on homelessness in the Cleveland area, and as part of the project, the students took a field trip to Transitional Housing in Cleveland to interview women who are trying to put their lives back together, often after leaving abusive relationships.

What the students came away with out of this trip will hopefully have a profound effect on their lives. They came to realize that these women are no different than they are — they just made a bad decision or were victimized by a bad decision during their life journeys and now they are trying to pick up the pieces and regroup. These are women with dreams and ambitions, just like the young women who interviewed them, and they are trying to reach those goals, just like their interviewers.

Society has placed an unfair stigma upon homeless people and it is through projects like this that the stigma can hopefully be shattered. Not every homeless person ended up in that position due to substance abuse — for many of these women, it was domestic abuse that drove them to the streets. They could have hid the physical and emotional scars provided by their spouse and continued to put up a facade that they were happily married and in a healthy relationship. Instead, they risked everything in order to salvage their dignity.

As the Hathaway Brown students engaged in this project, they took away much more than they ever imagined they would. As one student described it, “I’ve never met someone who is so empowering and after hearing her story, it makes me want to work harder and appreciate the little things in life that I take for granted.”

Everybody should take that message to heart. We are often quick to dismiss the homeless as worthless and insignificant, but they are human beings like the rest of us and they have a lot to offer society. Certainly the Hathaway Brown students realize that after taking the time to interact with them and they will not be so quick to judge the homeless in a negative manner after this project. It is a life lesson we would all be wise to remember.

That’s what we think. Share your opinion on this editorial or other topics by sending a letter to the editor to rjablonski@sun-news.com, faxing your letter to (216) 986-2340 or mailing it to Ray Jablonski, Sun News East Group editor, 5510 Cloverleaf Parkway, Cleveland, Ohio 44125. All letters must include the author’s name, city and a daytime phone number for verification and must be no more than 300 words in length.