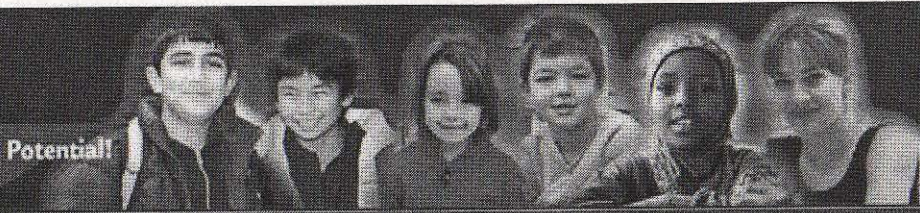


**HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
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Thursday, May 24, 2007

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## Newsroom

May 23, 2007

### How a trip to Washington D.C. was an eye-opening experience

By: Sonya Benjamin

Washington: known for its historic monuments, the politics, and patriotism. The city certainly stirred up anticipation and excitement from us, high school students from Canada, who were given the opportunity to visit it. The U.S. Capital was the destination on a long journey that started back in January.

The Asper Foundation, founded by Israel Asper, has embarked on major initiatives in Canada and internationally. These initiatives support Jewish causes, culture, community development, human rights, and education. After an event as severe as the Holocaust, which is still imprinted on the minds of many, The Asper Foundation was created to educate students.

Those of us accepted into the program participated in one of the Asper initiatives, The Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program. The importance of leadership and human rights was emphasized throughout the sessions that ran on Sunday nights and the Holocaust was taught in detail. These sessions prepared us for a trip to Washington, D.C. where we would have an opportunity of a lifetime - although most of us hadn't realized it yet.

When we arrived in Washington on May 6th, we were enthralled by the monuments of Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson and mesmerized by the thought of being feet away from the White House. The tours of the monuments, the museums we visited, and the play we saw were so enjoyable that most of us forgot the reason why we were in Washington in the first place. However, on our second day when we visited the National Holocaust Museum, our lives changed - forever.

Imagine thousands of shoes piled up in one area. Each pair represents one person - a person whose life was taken away from them during the time of the Holocaust. That representation of shoes in the museum was surreal. The realism of that display made it very memorable. We saw other things, such as thousands of photos of victims, and their belongings. The Holocaust museum was an eye-opener for us; we were actually seeing evidence of the Holocaust instead of reading about it. In that museum, we were face-to-face with history itself.

The following day we also heard from a Holocaust survivor and this is something that will remain in our memories for years to come. Our children will learn about the Holocaust survivors in textbooks, while we can tell them we heard one of them speak during a trip to Washington.

We've learned many things on this trip, and we are proud to have represented Hamilton, the School Board, and the Asper Foundation as best as possible while in Washington. This is an experience that has opened our eyes and mind about world issues and historic events. Since stories of our trip will be passed on to classmates, friends, and families, this trip and the whole experience itself was history in the making.

