



Saeng Philavanh, left, president of the local chapter of Students Against Violence Everywhere, Gary Weart, West Charlotte faculty member and Brianna McMinn, West Charlotte High senior, are pictured at a local chapter meeting at Kings Mountain High School cafeteria Monday.

## SAVE organizer speaks to chapter at KM High

Gary Weart, the West Charlotte High coach and teacher who took the lead in the organization of Students Against Violence Everywhere after the shooting death of one of his students, commended local chapter members Monday for their work in the community and suggested more projects to involve even younger kids.

"We need to add a new message against teen suicide," he said, saying that local programs to fifth graders in the elementary schools is a good way to start.

"But, kids in K-12 and above need to get the message that violence must be silenced and we need the active support of more parents and the community," he said.

Weart said SAVE involves teenagers in teen-organized projects that address the special needs of youngsters in and outside the context of crime and violence. They learn community organizing lessons, organizational structure and development techniques. They learn to handle emotional challenges and to teach, mentor and guide others.

Promoting a violence-free society, the local chapter has taken programs to local civic clubs and is in process of visiting elementary schools to show films dealing with current laws making it a felony for a person to have a weapon on a school campus. In addition, the local chapter is planning a special project for the Christmas season and recently secured pledges from students opposed to violence at a pledge dance after a recent football game. The proceeds will help provide a \$600 scholarship.

Weart, parent of three children ages 20, 18 and 18 months, says that fifth graders can take leadership of the program.

"Bombard kids K-12 with your message of non-violence," he said.

Weart said that metal detectors are only a short-term solution to weapon control in the schools. "These kids who take weapons to school have deep seated problems."

Weart showed numerous editorial cartoons following school violence in the Charlotte area including one that depicted the 3 R's as "reading, riting and revolver" and one with a revolver which was captioned, "Remember when kids thought trigger was a horse."

Weart also recounted how SAVE was organized on Monday, April 28, 1989 when West Charlotte High was ripping with the grief and anguish after the shooting death of junior Alex Orange as he tried to break up a fight at a party the night before.

Two hundred students responded to Weart's call for a meeting to organize students against violence. Orange's friend Angie Bynum, a senior, gave the name to the organization to promote peaceful resolutions to conflict. Their logo became the peace symbol of the 1960s - in black to symbolize their mourning set in a field of orange in Alex Orange's memory. Members often wear their unique orange T-shirts which bear the message of non-violence.

West Charlotte High promoted the violence free society in numerous events and radio talk shows and Bynum went with the group to New York recently

for a scheduled appearance on a talk show.

"The talk show hostess ran out of time and Angie was speaking when they started running the credits," said a disappointed Weart.

Weart said the Charlotte chapter had guided the development of 30 chapters through the United States when it was acclaimed by President Bush as one of the Thousand Points of Light. Since then SAVE has won numerous awards from local and state officials, he said.

Weart said he has a clear picture of how SAVE's mission and work can interact with existing organizations, schools at every level and in outreach projects.

He already has seen Stop the Killing and several other local groups team up with SAVE to co-sponsor events.

"We can open doors to teens everywhere," said Weart, who projects that SAVE will soon be a nationwide organization.

Personal commitment to intolerance for gangs, fighting, guns, alcohol and drug abuse are expressed by the teen members.

They also go a step further in their pledges to use no violent language such as "I am so made I could kill you."

"When kids get in trouble it's a cry for help and SAVE wants to help them," said local chapter president Saeng Philavanh.

Philavanh said the local chapter was not organized after an act of violence but was formed last year at the suggestion of the school system's task force against violence.

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### ZACHARY ALLISON Third birthday for Zachary Allison

Zachary Allison celebrated his third birthday November 16. He is the son of Dawn and Ronald Jimson of Spruce Street and the grandson of Janie and Tommy Perry and Ed and Ann Allison.

**CORRECTION**  
 The name of Kasey Sizemore was inadvertently omitted from the third grade A Honor Roll list from Bethware Elementary School.

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