

Middle Level Leadership Conference Huge Success

By Earle G. Bidwell, Assistant Executive Director

The Tenth Annual Middle Level Leadership Conference attracted over 550 participants to the Quinnipiac University Campus on March 13, 2001. Sponsored by Connecticut Lighting Centers the annual conference addressed: serving school and community, heroes among us, handling bullying and teasing and making a difference in one's school. One of the highlights of the conference for the students was a session by "Looking In Theater," a high school age drama group that role played issues around relationships in schools and interacted in character with the audience.

Working with middle school students from over 51 schools, students also met with recognized student leaders from Berlin High School, Brookfield High School, Woodstock Academy, Old Saybrook High School and Glastonbury High School. These young leaders who have already made a difference in their communities, shared their experiences and challenged the younger students to be significant leaders in their schools.

Three hundred ninety eight registrants, the largest number ever, also met with counselors and youth officers from West Hartford, East Granby, Glastonbury, Hamden, Woodstock, Deep River and Old Saybrook to develop strategies for dealing with bullies and supporting each other in schools.

The Over 100 chaperones and parents were enlightened, stimulated and entertained by nationally known consultants and authors Charlene Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese. Authors of *The Roller Coaster Years*, *Parenting 101* and *Cliques*, the presenters spoke of how destructive elements of cliques can be recognized and how schools can develop programs to counteract these elements.

Finally, Ms. Giannetti and Ms. Sagarese addressed the entire assembly in a wrap up session where all were challenged to "turn around the culture of cruelty that torments all students." NBC, Channel 30 covered the event and aired parts of the conference on their evening news programming.

Participating schools were challenged by Connecticut Lighting Centers to put the lessons learned into practice in their communities. The school that best applies the goals of the conference will be awarded the Arthur Director Leadership Award, a plaque and cash award named for the founder and Chairman of the Board of the Connecticut Lighting Centers.

