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# News Release

## **Premier Academy and Taiwanese School Share International Spotlight for “Best Practices”**

*Student Services Program Showcased at International Conference following Visit by Taiwanese Educators*

**Joliet, IL July 7, 2006:** A program designed to help alternative school students with counseling and other needs was recently highlighted as a “best practice” at the 2006 Global Conference of the National Career Development Association (NCDA) in Chicago.

Cheryl Rogers, Coordinator of the Student Support Services Program at Premier Academy (Joliet, IL) led a presentation on “Best Practices Around the World” to an international audience of educator and social workers. Rogers’ program serves the needs of middle school and high school students who are unable to continue their education in their local school. Premier is part of the Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) operated by the Education Service Network and administered by Rich Duran, Will County Regional Superintendent of Schools.

The mission of Student Support Services is to strengthen educational and workforce services by offering an array of programs that support, empower, and encourage the student’s unique needs through positive reinforcements, social services, and community linkages that help adolescents achieve success in society.

“What we’re all about,” said Rogers, “is helping remove barriers to progress. Sometimes that means putting a student into counseling for substance abuse or mental health issues. Other times, it means teaching a student how to deal with anger or make effective use of their time. There are many issues that we can and do address.”

According to Rogers, the Premier staff was excited and happy to have the opportunity to showcase their program as part of the conference on July 7-9, 2006. But the biggest reward came from sharing the limelight with the staff from a program in Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

Jui-Ping High School is a court-mandated high school program for females ages 12 to 21 who have violated Taiwan’s Commercial Sexual Exploitation Act. The school is a residential facility designed to help the former prostitutes re-integrate with their families and adapt to a new life.

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The Taiwan program sent three representatives to the NCDA conference—the high school’s principal Chiu-Lan Chang and staff members Pao-Hui Lui, and Hui-Min Lin. Prior to their presentation, they toured Premier Academy in Joliet, a visit arranged by Dr. Julia Yang, a professor at Governors State University.

Rogers said she learned a few greetings in Mandarin to use when the Taiwanese guests arrived on July 4<sup>th</sup>. “They were interested in things that our kids did. They loved our classrooms.”

After the tour, the Jui-Ping and Premier educators exchanged gifts. The Taiwanese brought key chains and pencils to give to the Premier students, who were not in session at the time. The pencils are imprinted with a Chinese proverb, “Wherever you go, there will be traces of your existence.” Rogers presented the Jui-Ping group with an American cookbook, a book on Chicago architecture, and handcrafted bracelets.

Language differences could have been a barrier to communication between the groups, but that did not happen. Rogers said she brushed up on Mandarin Chinese greetings to help break the ice. She also taught them the meaning of the word “chill” in American slang, which the Taiwanese used to evoke laughter during the NCDA presentation.

“It was a wonderful experience. We are friends for life,” said Rogers, recalling the days spent with the Taiwanese educators before and during the conference.

The biggest surprise, she said, was the similarity in philosophy and results at the Jui-Ping High School and Premier Academy programs.

In both programs, youth who are “falling between the cracks” are connected with various social and emotional support programs, Rogers said. “Because of these programs, many of the youth have shown an increase in self-esteem and have remained in school.”

Will County Regional Superintendent Rich Duran, whose office oversees Premier Academy, said he was impressed with the cultural exchange made possible by the NCDA conference and happy that the NCDA chose to recognize Premier as a “best practice.”

“If our students are going to be successful in life, they need to be exposed to challenging programs that pique their curiosity and stimulate their problem-solving skills,” Duran said. “We are grateful to have staff members like Cheryl Rogers, who are constantly expanding our students’ opportunities to connect with the real world.”

***Photos & Captions***

Three representatives of Taiwan's Jui-Ping High School, left to right: Chiu-Lan Chang, Pao-Hui-Lui, and Hui-Min Lin.



Presenting at the 2006 NCDA conference were representatives of Joliet's Premier Academy and Jui-Ping High School in Taiwan. Bottom, left to right are: Dr. Julia Yang, Pao-Hui-Lui, Hui-Min Lin, and Charrise Beach. Top row, left to right, are Andrew Lynn, Cheryl Rogers, Chyi-Lan Chang, and Kim Pointer.

