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Miss America's message welcomed in Chicago suburbs

Thursday, April 17, 2003

By James Anthony, Senior Correspondent - "Respect Yourself" - message of her three day tour



From left to right: Scott Phelps, Director of Program Development for Project Reality, U.S. Congressman Mark Kirk, Miss America 2003 Erika Harold, Kimberly Kirk (Mrs. Mark Kirk), and Libby Gray, Assistant Director of Project Reality.

CHICAGO -- Talking to high school students for the past three days, Miss America 2002 Erika Harold, concluded a Chicago area wide speaking stump today talking to kids about the need to abstain from harmful elements and to speak up against those that would try to bully them. Attendees said the reception was overwhelming.

"The response from the students has been so incredibly positive," said Libby Gray of Chicago-based Project Reality. "The attention that the students have given her is amazing, they have been so intent on her message both of bullying and abstinence."

Harold toured Wheeling High School, Waukegan High School, Meade Junior High, Morton East High School, and Hinsdale Middle School this week.

Accompanying Harold on the first portion of the tour was U.S. Congressman Mark Kirk (R-10). Kirk, who left today for a round of service in the Navy Reserves, was unable to comment directly about his participation, but observers agreed that the Congressman eagerly listened and responded to Harold's high school presentations.

"Each time Erika would tell her story about choosing to remain abstinent, you could see the Congressman listening so intently," said Gray. "His sheer energy and commitment in going to the high schools was encouraging."

Harold agreed.

"Seeing a sitting legislator come to the rallies and seeing how the kids respond when the abstinence message is getting out there is wonderful," said Harold. "At one school, Waukegan High School, when I told them my story and decision to remain abstinent, the kids broke out in a standing ovation. It was good for the Congressman to see that."

Harold also highlighted another memory.

"At Morton East High School I was able to preside over a 'commitment until marriage ceremony,'" said Harold. "This is where the students commit to saving themselves until marriage, and I presented each of them with a white rose representing purity, a pin, and a picture."

"And one other highlight was getting asked to go to the prom by a guy. My calendar was filled, however," she grinned.

Harold was raised in Champaign, Illinois, and was the reigning Miss Illinois when she won the Miss America 2002 crown. She won her title for both crowns with an abstinence-based message, which she continues to promote during her speaking engagements as Miss America.

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READER POLL

Who should the Illinois GOP U.S. Senate candidate be? Poll #2

- Jim Durkin
- Patrick O'Malley
- Donald Rumsfeld
- John Shimkus

Vote Now!

Total Votes: 181

View Results

IN DISCUSSION

- The Etiology of Homophobia
- OH PLEASE -- NOT EDGAR!!!
- Sarcastic Senate
- The perfect US Senate candidate...
- Erika is awesome!

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"It is finished."

~ Jesus Christ's last words before He died on the cross on this day, known to Christians around the world as **Good Friday**. These words indicated that Jesus' work on earth was completed, which involved living a sinless life, sharing God's plan of salvation, and dying as the ultimate sacrifice in payment of our sins.

(as quoted from the **Bible**, a book owned by many if not most **Illinoisans** and

"I think it's great. They're beginning to do something," said Mary Katris, whose family has operated Jim's restaurant and tavern on King Drive for more than 50 years. "I'm glad they tore the corner building down, too. It was an eyesore."

"It's been long and hard, a lot of work and a lot of meetings," said Mayor Bette Thomas. "I'm so thankful and grateful we had someone to go to like Congressman Kirk."

It isn't known when the intersection work will begin, or what its total cost will be. "We have to go back to the drawing board," Thomas said.

A major reconstruction of the mile-long stretch of King Drive between Green Bay and Sheridan roads also is planned. That project has been estimated to cost more than \$6 million.

About 70 percent of the King Drive cost will be paid for by the federal government, according to Bruce Burris, the city's consulting engineer. The new King Drive will have 8-foot-wide sidewalks, trees and new ornamental lighting, said Burris, speaking at a City Council committee meeting in January.