

Tolerance resonates with students after museum visit

By Kathryn Reed

Life-changing. That is how students describe their visit to the Museum of Tolerance in Southern California.

For the second year, Tisha Seims took her seventh-grade language arts students from South Tahoe Middle School to the museum.

It wasn't just the students who came away changed. Seims said she got more out of the museum this year.



Maria Nvarro,
l-r, Jazmine
Aragon,
Armando Reyes
and Cristian
Reyes

“The whole responsibility piece really stood out for me this time,” Seims said. “The thing I took from it was owning up to your own choices — not having mom or teachers make your choices.”

Before the 21 students headed south earlier this month Seims taught them about Anne Frank, the Holocaust, the Civil Rights movement and tolerance in general.

After the trip, there was a bit of decompression to go over everything they had seen, read and heard.

“Before (we went) I was not the nicest person,” student Cristian Reyes said. “Now I’m not judging people by how they look.”

One of the lasting impressions for Reyes was a picture of what looked like snow covering the ground. He learned it was really ashes from the gas chambers in Nazi Germany.

Jazmine Aragon said it was hard to learn about the Germans tossing newborns they didn’t want from hospital windows.

Armando Reyes remembers learning about Jews having to dig their own graves at the concentration camps.

Much of the Museum of Tolerance centers on the Holocaust, but it also touches on bullying, homosexuality and tolerating all people.

Reyes reflected on the segment in the museum about what happens if you drink and drive “the impact it has on others, not just the person behind the wheel.

Seeing the word “responsibility” in an array of language stuck with Aragon and Maria Navarro. It was that sense of no matter who you are, where you live or the language you speak, you are responsible for your actions, your choices.

Aragon said the lesson she took from the museum was to be “positive and not make fun of people.”

Another lesson from the museum was how homosexuals are discriminated against and how individuals have been killed solely for their sexual orientation.

Although the students all learned about tolerance and need to be more compassionate, they said hatred and racism are not issues at STMS.