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Speaker at BWHS passes on powerful message

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By Evan Lebo
Writer/MGN

BALDWIN, WI - The Holocaust...two words with an incredible amount of meaning. Last Wednesday, those words took on an even more powerful sense for juniors and seniors of Baldwin-Woodville High School.

For sophomores and freshmen, it was on the Tuesday before. The cause behind this deeper wisdom was speaker Tim Scott of Hammond. Scott spoke to the students not only on the Holocaust, but how the Holocaust relates to life as a present-day junior or senior in Baldwin-Woodville.

Scott has studied the Holocaust ever since he was a student in school and discovered a passion and yearning to know everything about this horrific time in history. Part of his life was spent as a German teacher at a boarding school. From there, he changed occupations and became a lawyer, of which he still practices today.

Scott actually studied law in Germany, and became acquainted with the German legal system. Also in Germany, he spent an extensive amount of time visiting concentration camps and gathering more and more information on the Holocaust. Currently, Scott has been to Germany over 20 times and continues to travel there. Years of research and study have provided him with the startling facts and details he utilizes in his speech.

On Wednesday, the students spent the entire day with Mr. Scott. The first part of the speech began around 8:30 a.m. during which Mr. Scott spoke on the Holocaust itself and had the chance to demonstrate his knowledge. What made this speech different from any typical one was the fact that Mr. Scott inserted the audience into the story.

He began by setting up a life: "The year is 1923 and you are a member of a Jewish family with one older sister, a younger brother, and one more brother to be born." His story was gender-neutral to make it as realistic as possible for students. He selected the year 1923 so that students would be the same age in the story as they currently are at BWHS. From there he developed the story, presenting his knowledge on the topic, and taking each junior and senior of BWHS on a journey travelled by millions some 70 years earlier.

The story moved through the segregation, the leaving of a hometown and the pain it entailed, through the barely tolerable, and for some, intolerable train ride to an unknown place, the arrival at a concentration or death camp (in this story it was Auschwitz-Birkenau located in



Speaker Tim Scott of Hammond teaching students at BWHS that the only way to prevent another Holocaust from occurring is to put out the flame of the Holocaust (through the candle) in their own beliefs and actions. Photo by Evan Lebo

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Poland), the walk-through of life at the camp for each different type of prisoner, and ultimately, the death of the student and his or her family.

The intensity of this too-realistic journey brought some students to tears. The story was so captivating, most students didn't even realize that three hours had passed between the beginning of their life and its demise. The details of each part were exact right down to the smells and feelings.

Following a lunch break, Scott showed the students different pictures he had gathered from his trips to Germany and the concentration camps, along with some photos taken during the Holocaust, explaining each specifically.

After this, Mr. Scott began the second half of his presentation. In this part, he related what happened some 70 years ago half-way across the world to the lives of juniors and seniors at BWHS. He explained how the Holocaust actually started with years and years of prior resentment towards the Jewish people, and how Adolf Hitler simply channeled those ill feelings and prejudices towards this group in order to gain power.

Hitler also singled out other groups of people for being different than what he felt was normal. How does any of that relate to BWHS students? Mr. Scott explained how in high school, kids can be singled out for "not fitting in" or not being "cool" and commonly separated into different groups and harassed or picked on. He also explained how there can be many myopic or hateful feelings towards different races or groups of people. Scott called these feelings "evidence that the spirit of the Holocaust is alive and well in Baldwin, Wisconsin."

Whenever Mr. Scott gives his speech (and he gives it many times all across Wisconsin and Minnesota), he asks the students to write essays back to him about how they feel the spirit of the Holocaust is present in their town or school. He had some shocking examples of essays with him that he read to the B-W students.

Many of these writings came from schools within 45 minutes of Baldwin, and the upsetting thoughts only furthered Scott's points on how the attitudes the Holocaust are still alive today. Several essays came from former presentations Scott made to Baldwin-Woodville High School itself and had a very powerful effect on the students.

Why did Scott share these with the students? He wanted them to be aware of these all-too-common feelings and to take action against such prejudiced views. Scott drove his meaning home by explaining that allowing such feelings and opinions to build and increase could ultimately lead to the occurrence of another holocaust. The only way to prevent such an event from happening is to "put out the flame, or spirit, of the Holocaust."

Many students described Scott's presentation in one word-intense. A flock of students approached Scott after the speech and deeply thanked him for his message. Some explained that they have been targeted for being different and how much it meant to them that someone was passing on a message they could not. In some ways, Tim Scott, through his speech, provided students with a voice to fight against not only prejudice, but also bullying and disrespectful treatment. He accomplished this whole message while changing students' minds of what those two words-the Holocaust-truly mean.



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