

## Within our walls

by Grace Halupnik

Xenophobia is not solely a national issue. Recent incidents within PV have left students feeling offended and baffled when friends or peers made comments degrading a person's culture or beliefs, even if things were said as a joke.

There have been numerous instances of vandalism in PV high school, symbols such as swastikas and other derogatory signs were found carved into lockers and desks. The upstairs boys bathroom was recently closed due to anti-semitic vandalism, although only one door was locked allowing boys to still enter from the other entrance way.

Although, these hateful acts are nothing new. Students confirm offensive vandalism has lined the walls in a majority of PVHS male bathrooms for years. Principal Mike Zimmer addressed the student body condemning this behavior and offering a \$500 award for information on culprits.



Vandalism located on the toilet paper dispenser in the boys' cafeteria bathroom. This phrase was a common chant at political rallies in Nazi Germany, meaning roughly "Hail Victory".

Guilty parties will be reported to the Scott County Sheriffs Department as a possible hate crime. In response to these reports, Zimmer stated, "Teenagers want to be accepted so badly by their peer group that they'll accept those kinds of comments, shrug them off, and laugh at them, when really they know they're very hurtful. That

can't happen. As a student body, we cannot accept that kind of language."

Zimmer also explained remorsefully that comments such as these completely undermine the Varsity Brands Spirit of Inclusion Award presented to PV in 2017. This award was given to honor PV's unwavering commitment to inclusion as well as to commemorate the creation of the Spartan Sparkles.



The 2017 Spirit of Inclusion award in the hands of Associate Principal Darren Erickson

Administration has taken additional measures to prevent further discriminatory comments in the classroom. Zimmer stated he is prepared to move the entire study hall from the new commons back to the cafeteria if vandalism on furniture ensues.

He also sent an email where he "asked our staff and each classroom teacher to walk around their room and make sure they're aware of what's going on. If they see (vandalism) on there...we'll track down who sits there," explained Zimmer.

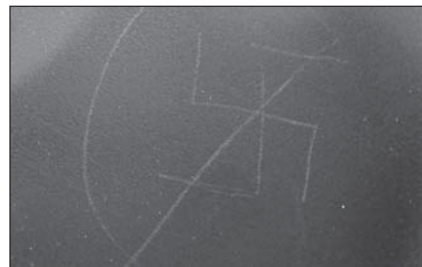
Teachers agree that such behavior is intolerable. "It just makes me sad to think that people aren't more accepting, sad to think that people think it's funny, sad to think that people don't

care about others," said math teacher Barb Pischke.

She was told by administration in response to the recent events to have a conversation with her SSR students about the importance of acceptance and reporting inappropriate behavior.

Pischke also commented that it is hard to know if administration did enough in light of the recent events. "Is it ever enough can be the real question. Would I like to see more opportunities where kids can learn about other cultures and countries? Yes, because often we make fun of things because we don't understand them. As far as what (administration) was able to do at this time point in time, it was handled as best as it could have been."

On the other hand, many students do not feel the situation was fully addressed. Junior Haley Humes explained, "The teachers in my fifth period didn't talk about it so I didn't even know this was an issue until Principal Zimmer made an announcement." She wished that her teachers had been more open in explaining the issue.



A swastika found scratched into a toilet paper dispenser in the boys' cafeteria bathroom.

Many students and staff agree that there is room for improvement in the inclusion of others within our own walls.