

Published February 8th, 2017

Wet weather doesn't dampen the spirits of young marchers on Inauguration weekend

By Sora O'Doherty



Children get ready to march. Photo Sora O'Doherty

marched to Theatre Square, around it, and returned to the starting point.

The event was organized by parent Nicole Reader with the help of an advisory board of children, including her son, 10-year old Isaac Reader-Taajtjes. Isaac and his friends Sammy Ishikawa and Casey Scheiner are fifth-grade students at Del Rey Elementary School.

Ishikawa said, "Although we disagree with some of Donald Trump's points, this is not a negative event." Scheiner added, "We don't want to criticize but to support." Things of concern to the three include immigration, diversity, equal rights, education and global warming.

Reader said that she found that her children felt very upset and powerless following the 2016 presidential election, that things that were important to them were now no longer important to the world.

She thought, "how terrible to be a kid, you can't even vote," and tried to conceive of a tangible action for them to demonstrate the things they care about. It was, she thought, important not to be abstract, but to be supportive, standing up, in an action-based way.

They did a post-election march right before the candlelight vigil on Nov. 18, attended by about 100. She had several meetings with groups of children to plan the inaugural event. The idea was to convert concern and to flip it into hope. For example, concern about war became hope for peace, and the children can think about how to make their hopes happen.

However, not everyone agreed with Reader. When the inaugural event was publicized on the private social media site Nextdoor, it evinced a stream of very negative opinions.

Reader said she had seen the comments, but, she said she felt it was a parent's right and responsibility to teach our values to their children. "We talk," she said, "and children draw their own opinions."

Some of the letters written by the children:

"Dear President Trump, I think you should help the environment by not building stuff in the wild. I also think you should be kind to poor, homeless and immigrant people. The country is meant to be for everyone. You shouldn't drive people such as homeless people, out of the U.S.A. Please do not pollute in habitats. From Ryan Lo"

"Dear President Trump, I am concerned about your policy of immigration. I think you should let all people of ALL races come to the United States after all it is supposed to be united. Sincerely, Isaac Reader-Taajtjes"

"Dear White House I suggest, that you try to get people to treat others nicely. Sincerely, Mia"

The Kid's Inauguration Day Response and March went off without a hitch in Orinda on Sunday, Jan. 22, despite bucketing rain.

The event began in the early afternoon, when over 50 children and parents gathered at the Orinda Community Church to prepare for the march by creating colorful shirts and signs and to write letters to new President Donald Trump offering him a view of their hopes for the future. The letters will be submitted as part of an initiative by the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance project. Other activities included making beaded safety pins and posting their hopes and concerns on the board.

After spending some time at the church, the group reassembled on the steps of the Orinda Community Hall. By this time it was raining very heavily. Undeterred, under a fleet of bright umbrellas, the group cheerfully

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