



Remarks by Montara Vilayvanh
President, Students Against Prejudice

Wichita High School East
Americans All® Press Conference, November 6, 2003
Wichita, Kansas

Good morning,

I am Montara Vilayvanh, president of Students Against Prejudice at East High. I'd like to welcome you to East High, and thank you for coming to celebrate the potential relocation of the Americans All® headquarters here to Wichita.

I would also like to thank you for your support of what this organization stands for. Just your presence here alone documents your support of the fight against bias, discrimination and prejudice, all of which can be overcome through education.

Diversity is one of the greatest qualities in life, because after all, variety is the spice of life. However, we know that people still fear what is different from them. If we look at the differences that have separated people all throughout time—how much money we have in our pockets or the color of our skin—we will see that none of these determines who a person really is. Diversity should not be feared or be the cause of separation; rather it should be celebrated.

The world has so much to offer. And if we allow our minds to close to understanding a different belief, we will be missing out on such a big, beautiful picture. Opening our minds to new people, new experiences, new cultures and new beliefs will enrich our character as well as help us develop a better understanding of the world around us.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm a member of Students Against Prejudice, also known as SAP. One of SAP's main beliefs is that, if you never step outside the comfort zone, you never truly learn. Therefore, I suggest that you don't let society or anyone else dictate what you believe. Go out there and educate yourself; come to your own conclusions. And, most likely you'll find, in the end, that we are all more alike than we are different. People are rich and poor, educated and uneducated. We are stereotypical and we are unique. We are who we are. We are human beings, and that's an important lesson we have to learn. We are all people—one no better than another, none more or less human.

Wichita is very fortunate to have Americans All® in town. Although we have a very diverse population, it does not mean that everyone gets along or always understands one another. And at the end of the day, we still run back to our North Barrio, our College Hill, our Northeast Side, our East Borough, our Plainview or wherever else we live. Yet with Americans All® here promoting education and understanding, hopefully we can

continue to improve on that situation. And the front pages would contain less about terrorism or the state of the economy. Rather they would be covered with the positive vibrations of the uniting of people. This world has no more room for hate and intolerance. What it needs is more understanding and acceptance and more organizations like Americans All® and Students Against Prejudice to create such a world. And East High and Students Against Prejudice are glad to join in the effort with Americans All®.

Thank you once again for coming and showing your support for our activities.



Montara Vilayvanh (center at podium) and members of SAP
 at the Americans All® Press Conference

Wichita High School East's Students Against Prejudice

Students Against Prejudice (SAP) was founded in fall 2001 at Wichita High School East by several students who expressed an interest in forming a club that would focus on promoting diversity and understanding within the school and community. It has steadily grown into an active, successful club. The club's motto is "We live in a world of diversity. As Students Against Prejudice we fight the act of discrimination by promoting tolerance, cultural acceptance, social awareness, understanding and unity." Club members have participated in activities such as diversity training, diversity panels, AIDS Awareness Day, Mix It Up Day, Random Acts of Kindness Week, a Martin Luther King Jr. Parade and visits with autistic students. They are an extremely conscious group of students who constantly strive to become more informed every day.

Montara Vilayvanh, a senior at Wichita High School East and SAP's current president, delivered remarks on behalf of the club at the Americans All® press conference. When asked why she joined SAP she said, "I wanted to be a part of something that would make a positive difference in people's lives. Through my participation in SAP, I was able to change the way I saw the world and in turn I have become more open and confident with my beliefs and options. This has provided me with an opportunity to help change the way people view others who are different from them. I am very proud and honored to be a part of the fight for a world with more understanding, awareness, education, unity and celebration."