

## OUR STORIES

### Thurgood Marshall NAACP chapter celebrates anniversary



*Photo from left: Members of the Thurgood Marshall STEM High School NAACP Chapter. Front from left: Teliea Gomez, Shemaya Wingard. Back from left: Stariona Brown, Thyiel Caldwell, Briana Thomas, Dariana Tolliver, Lt. Col. Claudia Mason. (Photo/Jill Drury)*

Dariana Tolliver is like many young women at her school. The junior is working hard in class, making friends, even showing a bit of rebellious spirit sporting a streak of purple in her hair. But, there is one thing that only she can say is true. Dariana is the first president of the first NAACP high school chapter in Ohio.

The Move Foward Thurgood Marshall STEM High School chapter of the NAACP recently celebrated its first anniversary. As a result, nearly 30 students, including Dariana, are experiencing the world in a whole new light.

“It’s easy to stay in your own little bubble, but I want to look outside and see what’s happening in my community,” Dariana said. “It’s important to educate ourselves about what’s going on in the world.”

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The chapter is a civic engagement project of the Army JROTC Leadership Program at Thurgood Marshall. Lt. Col. Claudia Mason was instrumental in its creation and serves as the first high school NAACP advisor in the state. Mason believes it is important for her students to share the good things happening at their school.

“I want these kids to have a sense of pride and confidence. I want them to relish all the good things that Thurgood Marshall has to offer and share those positives with the community,” Lt. Col. Mason said.

She encourages chapter members to embrace history and experience current events that will help shape their future. For example, the students took part in Lobby Day at the Ohio Statehouse and met with Rep. Teresa Fedor about sex trafficking prevention. They took part in a political rally during the 2016 presidential campaign, and discussed the concept of a peaceful world at the Teens Inventing Peaceful Solutions Summit at Dayton’s Peace Museum. The students also saw movies like “Hidden Figures” and “Loving” that explore the African-American experience.

One field trip that holds special meaning for Dariana and chapter treasurer, Shemaya Wingard, was a trip to a national NAACP meeting in Cincinnati where they met Stephen Green, director of the youth and college division.

“I just loved his confidence,” Dariana said. “I compare him to MLK.”

Dayton NAACP President Derrick Foward helped charter the Thurgood Marshall chapter. It was approved in February 2016 at a national board meeting in New York. Foward paid for the memberships of the first 25 students. He also honored the high school chapter with a special proclamation at the Freedom Fund Banquet last fall.