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Tuesdays with Glenwood: The Big Picture Seminar

The Big Picture Seminar has been running for a few years in several Canadian cities including Vancouver, London, Toronto, Kingston, Montreal and Quebec City. It is designed to help young men develop a strong vision of their future as they enter high school. The BC Catholic (November 28, 2005) dealt with the impact of the program in the Vancouver area.

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Tuesdays will never be the same for the 21 Grade 9 and 10 students currently attending the Big Picture Seminar at Glenwood, a centre located at 4050 Osler Street in Vancouver that helps with both the human and spiritual formation of young men.

Glenwood helps high school and university students work towards becoming competent, generous, and responsible men who understand that professionalism and excellence are best directed to serving society. One of the programs it has been offering for the past four years is the Big Picture Seminar, held every Tuesday from September to May, 7 to 8 p.m.

"The purpose of the Big Picture Seminar is to help students in Grade 9 realize the challenges that they are going to face very soon," said Mario Jardon, the Director of Glenwood and the Co-ordinator of the Big Picture Seminar.

Participants listen to talks and attend workshops by people with more life experience. This helps them to prepare for the personal choices they will face about such issues as family and career.

The program is offered mainly to students entering Grade 9; however, in some cases it accepts Grade 8 and 10 students. Jardon said Grade 9 students are at a very critical age, and they are mature enough to understand the content of the program. The Big Picture Seminar is only for boys, but there is another centre that offers a similar program for girls.

Other cities, including Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec City, have centres offering the same program. In Greater Vancouver, however, only Glenwood has the Big Picture Seminar. Jardon said that there have been some requests about starting one in Surrey, but they are still studying that possibility.

The cost of the seminar is \$150. Interested parents and participants can either apply online or go to the centre. Potential members are interviewed to make sure they really want to be involved in the program.

"It makes a big difference if the young man himself wants to participate in the program, rather than his parents wanting him to attend," said Jardon.

He also said that although there is no official closure of registration, he advises interested people at this late date to register for next year's

seminar, so that they will be able to grasp fully the speakers' message.

Christopher Elvidge, a Grade 12 student who attended the program three years ago, said, "I think it (the Big Picture Seminar) is great because they tell you how to get jobs, how to get ahead, and how to prepare for university and life in general."

He said he does not regret participating in the program because once a student takes part, he will be invited to the other activities Glenwood offers, such as retreats, volunteer works, and daily excursions such as mountain climbing and canoeing.

His father, David Elvidge, is so pleased with the effect of the program on Christopher that he now has his younger son attending the Big Picture Seminar. David, who usually stays and listens to the talks himself, said the speakers are teaching the

same values he is trying to instil in his children.

He sees this reinforcement of values by non-parents as a benefit of the Big Picture Seminar, and he is happy that the seminar makes participants start thinking about important issues when they are in Grade 9 rather than in the last month of Grade 12.

"It has been worth the effort, from this family's perspective, to provide this additional learning opportunity for the boys," David said.

Despite all the sacrifices they have to make, he still believes that all of it is worthwhile because of the intangible values his sons will gain from this experience.

Jardon added that the people involved in Glenwood are very optimistic about the outcome of the program. They believe that the Big Picture Seminar is a good way to

grow. "We care for the formation of young people," he said.

Formation activities at Glenwood are entrusted to Opus Dei, which was founded in 1928 by St. Josemaria Escriva. Opus Dei is an institution of the Catholic Church with the mission of spreading the message that all are called by God to seek holiness in and through their daily work, family life, and social relations.

For more information, visit www.glenweb.ca.

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