

## **Author encourages students to make the write choice: Chris Crutcher speaks to Spring Woods Students**

*By Shane Healy of Tiger TV*

On Thursday, October the 23<sup>rd</sup>, author Chris Crutcher spent the day at Spring Woods High School with some of the sophomore English classes and interested students. Crutcher's published works include *Running Loose*, *Whale Talk*, *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, and *Ironman*.

In three ninety-minute presentations, Chris Crutcher conveyed a very positive message to the students on life as a whole and on helping others. He focused on the importance of personal relationships, the reality of problems facing teenagers, and the opportunity for personal improvement through difficulties. All of these topics are emblematic of his books' themes. Mr. Crutcher also vividly depicted his small-town upbringing, his deficiency in sports (something that he refers to with good-natured humor), and his work with troubled children. Everyone listening learned a lot from the inspirational words of this famous author, and I suspect that Chris Crutcher also learned a thing or two from the attitudes of the admiring students.

This exceptional experience was made possible through the generosity of the Gear-Up Grant. Mr. Matthew McConn, the chairman of the Spring Woods English Department, utilized Gear-Up's funds to the benefit of the students. "I'd like to do this every year," said McConn, when asked if there were future plans to bring more authors to the campus.

Mr. McConn candidly expressed his gratitude towards Chris Crutcher and told him afterwards, "This was the best learning experience for my students I've seen in seventeen years of teaching, and I'm glad you got to be a part of that." Mr. Crutcher accepted the praise with endearing humility and grace. He then went on to participate in a taped interview with the SWHS's own broadcasting crew, Tiger TV.

Mr. McConn's positive take on Chris Crutcher was right on. I can personally vouch for his witty anecdotes, stunning candor, and the consistency of Mr. Crutcher in his presentation. Whether discussing the ups-and-downs of child abuse or the comical aspects of sports injuries, Chris Crutcher related to the students on a personal level. Although he talked to the students as a group, his words held meaning to every individual present.

Even after achieving fame and monetary success, Chris Crutcher accepted the opportunity to speak to students at Spring Woods High School largely because of his aspiration to better the lives of the Spring Woods students with wisdom learned over the years. His desire to work towards heightened friendship, respect, and fairness between diverse groups of people is best defined in his own words, "You can't allow your philosophy to get in the way of your humanity. Too many times we have different opinions than someone else, so we let that affect how we treat them."

It is clear that because of Chris Crutcher's motivating appearance at SWHS, students are one step closer to realizing the dream of diversity unified in fellowship and friendship.