

**NEWS RELEASE: For immediate release**

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**Vestal Superintendent Responds to NYS Division of Human Rights Report**

On behalf of the Vestal Central School District, I want to state how much we appreciate the Division of Human Rights' assistance in helping resolve a very difficult situation. We want to thank Commissioner Kirkland for making available the Division's resources, and specifically thank Ms. Carlin for her efforts.

The division's recently concluded report is very thorough. We do not dispute any of the facts included in this report and accept the majority of its conclusions and recommendations. We are hopeful that with the issuance of this report we can bring closure to this matter.

We are very pleased that the report substantiates the findings of the internal preliminary investigation conducted by the Vestal School District's Compliance Officer, Mr. Keith Olivet, and released on October 8, 2008. As the report from the Division of Human Rights states in its first conclusion, "The overwhelming majority of attendees at the October 4<sup>th</sup> game, including players from the Vestal and Horseheads teams, spectators who support both the Vestal and Horseheads teams, both referees and the coach of the Vestal team heard no racially derogatory language on that day."

While there is no evidence to issue a finding of fact with regard to the allegations that were made, the report makes clear that there were a number of individuals who believed they were victims of a verbal attack. We want those individuals to know that we would never condone such behavior, and that we would have taken swift action had evidence revealed a perpetrator.

The Division's report offers a number of recommendations to the Southern Tier Athletic Conference (STAC) that we believe will help emphasize that there is no place in our schools, or in our society, for such behavior. We look forward to working with STAC to implement those recommended changes in order to achieve that goal.

I want to reiterate my comments from the press conference I conducted October 9, 2008. While thorough investigations by the Horseheads School District, the Vestal School District, and now the NYS Division of Human Rights found no evidence to support the allegations, this finding does not diminish the pain and hurt that members of the Horseheads JV soccer team must have felt that day, believing such comments had been made. Despite what we have learned - the poor officiating, rough play and the belief by some that their concerns were not being addressed - the Horseheads girls' reaction to the alleged slurs is understandable. The tragic part of this entire episode is that the feelings that these girls experienced were very real. Hopefully, with the issuance of this report, both communities can move forward.