

Students gang up on bullying

By PAIGE GALEA
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In Canada, studies suggest that about eight per cent of students aged 12 to 19 are bullied on a weekly basis, according to Public Safety Canada. Unable to cope with constant bullying, some children and youth commit suicide. This situation has become so common there is a word to describe it: Bullycide.

On Nov 18 St. Edmund Campion Secondary School hosted an anti-bullying assembly to raise awareness and student support for putting an end to this hurtful and sometimes deadly behavior amongst youth. Students were asked to sign-up as active members of a growing anti-bullying movement.

Campion's senior basketball team faced off against a Peel Regional Police team at the assembly. The student basketball players kicked off the game by holding up signs carrying strong anti-bullying messages.

Joshua Miller, a Grade 12 student, was the half-time master of ceremonies.

"The assembly could go both ways," he says. "Some people will pay attention and learn from it. Others won't and will continue to not take action."

Daphne Joanes, a religion teacher on the school's Anti-Bullying Committee, hopes students will begin to understand bullying has serious consequences that can even lead to teen suicide.

"Even small comments can effect students," she says.

"I used to be bullied back in elementary school," Miller reveals. "I have also witnessed it and tried to stop it, but there isn't much you can do. When I was bullied I felt depressed and closed off to the world."

Brittany Mongolais, a Grade 11 student, also admits she has been a bullying victim. Both students agreed that it had a huge effect on their emotional stability.

As part of the school campaign, an Anti-Bullying Creative Writing Contest was held and the winner read their piece during the assembly. Also, televisions in every classroom displayed quotes and clips about bullying. Each homeroom class was handed out a pledge form to sign in order to stop bullying in the school, explains Joanes.

"Although it's not mandatory to sign it, I have already signed it," says Mongolais, who took part in the creative writing contest. "I think its important."

"I will be signing it for sure," adds Miller.

Organizers planned the event to assist in building a community, raise awareness and combat school crime.

According to data published by Public Safety Canada, almost 40 per cent of boys and 31 per cent of girls who frequently bully report delinquent behaviour. For those who rarely or never bully, the delinquency rate is just five percent for boys and three per cent for girls. The same data also noted research has shown that children who bully are 37 per cent more likely to commit offences as adults.

Students had the opportunity to "buy-out" of their fourth period class for two dollars, so they could attend the basketball game. All proceeds raised through the event is being donated to the Toys For Tots campaign, which provides Christmas gifts to underprivileged children in the community.

"The Peel Police and the kids of Campion feel it's important to support the unfortunate," Joanes says.



Having a ball. St. Edmund Campion Secondary School basketball player Philip Butler (No. 25) ran into the long arm of the law when the school's senior team took on a team from Peel Regional Police during a charity game held as part of an anti-bullying campaign recently organized at the school. *Photo by George Beshiri*