

Bullying from A1

accurate.

"I'm not suggesting by any means that we wipe out bullying at Bohemia. I wish I could say that," Bridgens said. "But I do think that we talk openly about it and we address it head on. It is not a hidden subculture. We do not sweep it under the rug. I think because we talk about it and because we have context for that verbiage, students better understand the concept of what it means to be a good friend, to be a respectful citizen--because you don't have to be friends with everyone -- and what it means to be a bully."

The Buddies program has other effects beyond ticking down the number of bullying reports. Teachers who might not see each other outside of staff meetings get a chance to work together and build a work family not unlike the family connections the program tries to create with the students. It also seems that kids who participate have more empathy.

"I think it helps them think about how different kids act and to be accepting of that and be patient with one another," said Fairchild. "As an older buddy, you have to be patient with the younger buddies, and I've

seen that transfer over into how they treat each other."

Upstanders, not Bystanders

With a phone in every pocket and social media like Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter dominating the attention of nearly everyone, bullying has made a shift from in-person to the Information Superhighway. At Lincoln Middle School, they've tried to give kids the tools to be safe online.

School counselors Thomas Partridge and Connie Wonham began the #ICANHELP campaign at Lincoln. They brought in a speaker to help kids understand the program and how they can participate.

"If you see [bullying] on social media and you're putting a laugh comment or liking a comment that was mean to someone then you're part of the problem," said Jeremy Smith, former principal of Lincoln Middle School. "Even if you don't do that and you're just a bystander, then that can lead to people thinking that's an acceptable behavior."

In just a year since the all-school assembly that brought kids together to learn about upstanding instead of bystanding, a com-

mon language and techniques to deal with their bullies, Smith feels like he's seen cases of cyberbullying drop--even if he didn't at the time of writing have hard data to support that.

Beyond the insults hurled behind a screen, though, Smith says the program has had a positive effect on students:

"The fact that [the kids] saw a system and a way to respond, we saw students that before we [had] expected to be timid and be a victim, we saw more of those kids standing up for themselves and maybe demanding the respect they maybe wouldn't have at other times," said Smith.

Data Differences

It's no secret that kids bully each other in school. Tracking those incidents in SLSD has been a little harder. In the past, the district had multiple referral forms for student misconduct and used different computer-based tracking systems to bring data together. This year, the district is making changes.

They've started using a single referral form and the same definitions at every school in the district. That will help track inci-

dents, according to Brian McCasline, the interim assistant superintendent of SLSD. The district is also updating its data system to make it easier for administrators to make sense of the discipline data across every school, including bullying incidents.

"For example, on the referral form it might say 'defiant and disruptive behavior.' If some [forms] have that and some have something different, it's really hard to compare [data] across the district. Now everyone has the same categories of behavior so that will make it a lot easier to use," said McCasline.

One of the new systems the district has adopted is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is a U.S. government-funded education program that helps educators and administrators be more effective in sniffing out bad behaviors and dealing with them before they escalate into something worse.

McCasline said that SLSD is adopting PBIS district-wide this school year, but pieces of it have been used in the district for several years. PBIS helps give more detailed data than ever

before to principals and the district office, which can help them figure out where they need to shore up their efforts to make sure the kids are safe.

"What PBIS allows you to do is pinpoint where, when and how things are happening, so that you can prevent many of those situations," McCasline said. "You can pinpoint between 12:00 and 12:15 we're having an issue in the cafeteria with horseplay. Or we're having an issue with bullying-type behavior from 12:30 to 12:45 on the playground. Then you can really put things in place to stop that behavior from happening."

All of this information helps the district make sure they're teaching students acceptable behaviors and shift supervision when needed -- all in an effort to make sure kids are safe and don't become repeat offenders.

Payton grabbed Boston's now-finished pumpkin drawing and swapped it with her own. Boston gently took it back, and a playful game of keep-away began. In the moment, the girls could have been sisters.

In that moment, they were.

National Crime Prevention Month & Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Don't have your identity stolen



Every person in the country is unique and has an identifying name and numbers assigned to him or her that help regulate aspects of his or her professional and personal life. When some form of a person's identification is stolen, this is known as identity theft, and it can wreak havoc on finances and personal credit. There are a number of steps men and women can take to avoid being victimized by identity theft.

In the United States, a driver's license and a social security number are used to identify individuals. (In Canada, individuals are issued social insurance numbers.) Credit cards are also issued in a person's name, and unique numbers assigned enable individuals on the account to make purchases on credit. From debit card PIN numbers to other sources of identification, the average person has a lot of information that separates him or her from others.

Identity theft has become a prolific problem. Having so many sources of identity around makes it easier for identity thieves to target individuals. In a largely digital society, thieves have learned how to capture credit card numbers and access social security numbers from correspondence over the Internet or simply by reading magnetic-stripped cards right in a wallet. The identities of the deceased are also being stolen thanks to information published online.

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that as many as nine million Americans have their identities stolen each year. According to a McMaster eBusiness Research Centre study, 6.5 percent of the total Canadian population reported being a victim of identity theft in 2007. Most identity theft cases involve fraudulent credit card transactions.

There are different ways to protect yourself from identity theft. The first step is identifying the various ways thieves might gather a potential victim's personal information.

Simple stealing: Thieves can get personal information and credit cards simply by taking wallets or purses. Some take mail, including bank statements or newly issued credit cards, out of mailboxes. Some thieves take information from personnel records or bribe employees who may have access to this information.

Trash hunting: They say one man's trash is another man's treasure, and some identity thieves put this adage to the test. When individuals discard bank statements or credit card bills without shredding them, the papers can be taken out of trash cans or bags. Anything thrown out with a form of identification on it can be stolen and used.

Phishing, vishing and shmishing: Phishing is a term that describes identity theft tactics surrounding e-mail and Internet use. With phishing, individuals are lured to give out personal information via an e-mail that is thought to be from a reputable financial establishment. Anti-phishing technology has been developed to pinpoint phishing e-mails, but hackers and phishers have developed their own methods to thwart it. Physically asking for information over the phone is known as vishing. Information requested over texts or short messages is known

as shmishing.

Skimming: Thieves use special devices attached to credit card readers to store data for later use. There are also devices that can read credit card information while the card is still in a wallet.

Pretexting: According to the FTC, pretexters use a variety of tactics to get personal information. For example, a pretexter may call, claim he's from a research firm, and ask a person for his name, address, birth date, and social security number. When the pretexter has the information he wants, he uses it to call that person's financial institution. He pretends to be the account holder or someone with authorized access to the account. The information may be later sold to a person looking to get credit.

Now that many of the identity theft methods have been explained, protecting oneself involves taking precautionary steps.

- Do not keep many credit cards in your wallet, and leave passports and social security cards at home. The less personal items you carry, the harder it becomes for would-be thieves to access your private information.
- Consider a locked mailbox or use a post office box if you are concerned about mail theft.
- Shred all papers containing personal information before putting them in the trash or recycling bin.
- Always identify an individual before giving out personal information via phone, e-mail or text messages. Most financial institutions will not ask for information over e-mail or the telephone. If you are unsure, call the bank and ask for their policy. Also, even if the person is reputable, keep in mind that data can be intercepted over phone lines or through digital channels if they are not secure.
- Watch your credit card as much as possible when using it for dining out or when it is taken out of your sight to be swiped. Routinely check your statements and credit scores to see if there were unauthorized charges made. Also, there are special wallets that prevent skimming of card information while the card is in your wallet.
- When in doubt, do not give out any personal information. Try to do your business in person. Do not offer social security numbers to a survey-taker or anyone else contacting you over the phone. Being stringent in researching information requests can cut down on identity theft.

Although some people can resolve identity theft quickly, for others it can take years and hundreds of dollars to repair their names. Taking a proactive approach to identity theft is the key to thwarting it.

Signs of domestic violence

Domestic violence is a problem that can affect anyone at anytime. Considering victims are usually frightened of their abusers, they often suffer in silence.

The Domestic Violence Resource Center says that 1 in 4 women has experienced domestic violence in her lifetime. Estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend to 3 million women who are physically abused by their husbands or boyfriends per year. Men can also be victims of domestic violence at the hands of their female partners, and abuse can occur between same-sex couples as well. However, the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that women ages 20-24 are at the greatest risk of nonfatal intimate partner violence.

Domestic violence comes in many forms, including physical, emotional and verbal abuse. Many victims of domestic violence are battered into secrecy or are embarrassed that they are being abused and do not share their experiences with others. Others might not even realize what they are experiencing constitutes abuse. But there are some signs of domestic violence that can be observed and a third party may be able to intervene.

• A partner who harbors unrealistic expectations. Experts say that those who engage in domestic violence

are generally perfectionists and expect those around them to reach unattainable goals and their own perfection. Violence may result when things do not go of without a hitch.

- A partner who is controlling. When a person insists you account for all of your time, the relationship may eventually turn abusive. This behavior generally stems from feelings of insecurity and poor self-esteem on the part of the abusive individual, which is then projected on the partner in terms of abusive words or distrust.
- Escalating threats: In many cases, domestic violence begins with verbal assaults which may develop into physical threats. Whether the abuse is verbal or physical, it can have profound and long-lasting effects on the victim. For those who observe a person continually browbeating a spouse or talking badly about him or her, this may be an indication of an abusive relationship.
- A partner with a noticeable temper. Sometimes a temper goes hand-in-hand with domestic violence. An individual with a short fuse and a propensity for lashing out with minimal patience in areas outside of his or her relationship may be equally short-fused in the relationship.
- A partner who limits access to money, belongings or the car. You may notice your friend or a family member continually having to ask

permission to use the car or visit with people. Some friends complain about not having access to the checkbook or being kept on a strict budget. While not always a case of domestic violence, it may be a warning sign that something is not right.

- Hidden bruises or excuses for injuries: Michigan State University's Safe Place indicates that injuries that are covered up and happen with some frequency could be an early warning sign of domestic violence. If you know someone who is trying to downplay frequent injuries, it may be a red flag.
- Conflict avoidance: Usually those who are in abusive relationships try to avoid conflict and rarely speak up or voice their own opinions.
- Personality changes: Withdrawal, inability or not wanting to meet up with friends, loss of enthusiasm, or any other personality changes may be indicative of abuse.

Domestic violence is something that takes many forms and is often hidden. But there may be some warning signs that can be observed through an outside party.



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CRIME

CRIME PREVENTION SMARTS

Preventing crime is a group effort that requires cooperation from all community members.

- ✓ Remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times, particularly in parking garages.
- ✓ Organize a neighborhood cleanup, or sponsor a neighborhood watch group.
- ✓ Illuminate areas where intruders can hide, and trim shrubbery around your home's doors and windows.

Cottage Grove Police Department: 541-942-9145