

## Local schools tackle bullying

By Tyler Zdan –November 10, 2008 Edson Leader

A local school is taking steps toward making Edson a bully-free community. Earlier this month, Parkland Composite High School submitted a formal appeal to the town of Edson, requesting that the town officially recognize the week of Nov. 16 to 22 as Bullying Awareness Week.

Town council approved the school's request at its regular meeting on Oct. 14 and proclaimed itself "a community striving to be bully free." |

Parkland family school liaison Michelle Barron said that the request for the community proclamation is only the first in a number of steps that Parkland is taking to recognize Bullying Awareness Week. She said that the school is implementing a number of strategies to raise awareness towards bullying and tackle the issue head-on.

Barron said that Parkland teachers and facilitators will be addressing bullying in class and teaching students how they can take steps to combat bullying themselves.

"[The school] is a good place to give kids an opportunity to see their role in stopping bullying," Barron explained.

Barron added that Parkland has adopted a "stand up and speak out" approach to bullying, encouraging students to stand up for themselves and their peers. "We know that if a peer stands up and says 'No', then the bullying will stop," she said.

Barron added that the school will be encouraging students to wear pink — the official colour of Bullying Awareness Week — throughout the week to show their support for the anti-bullying campaign.

Student and staff volunteers will also be serving up a pink pancake breakfast for local dignitaries, students and parents on Friday, Nov. 21 in an effort to help raise awareness.

Barron said that Parkland is striving to raise bullying awareness throughout the entire community. She said that the school views bullying as a problem that reaches far beyond the walls of local schools.

"We submitted the community proclamation because we know that bullying is an issue for the entire community — it isn't only a school problem," she explained. "Things don't just happen at school, so we wanted to address bullying with a holistic community approach."

Barron added that so far, the community has been very responsive to Parkland's anti-bullying initiative.

A number of local businesses have already jumped on board to help the school with its anti-bullying campaign.

The FOX radio will be broadcasting live from Parkland on Nov. 21. Edson IGA is providing volunteers to help with the pancake breakfast, and Tim Hortons will be supplying coffee for the event.

Barron said that the community support thus far has been "wonderful."  
Pine Grove stands up to bullies

Another local school has also joined the fight against bullying. Pine Grove Middle School is taking its own steps to raise bullying awareness by both educating students and making bullying awareness fun as well. The local middle school's anti-bullying campaign is already in full gear, said Pine Grove family school liaison Dee Trozzo.

Pine Grove has a number of activities planned for the weeks leading up to Bullying Awareness Week, as well as for the week itself.

Early last week, groups of grade eight students competed against each other to see who could create the best bullying awareness radio advertisement, with the top three winning the opportunity to work with the Fox in developing radio ads. These ads will be broadcast on the Fox and in Pine Grove School during Bullying Awareness Week.

Like Parkland High, Pine Grove will also be serving a pink pancake breakfast on Nov. 21. According to Trozzo, the idea for pink pancakes originated at Pine Grove.

"We were actually the ones that initiated it and we actually challenged the other schools to join us," she said.

Pine Grove will also hold anti-bullying poster and poetry contests during Bullying Awareness Week.

Trozzo said that the school isn't waiting around for bullying Awareness Week to take action.

"It's a bigger thing than can happen in just one week that we are doing here — it's educating students and creating a culture change — it's something that is and will continue going on every day," she said.

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