

Mom takes action against school bullying; Bullying Awareness Week Nov. 16-22

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Her daughter's upsetting ordeal at the hands of a school bully prompted **Krystal Armstrong** to launch a campaign against bullying.

And Armstrong's efforts prompted the City to proclaim Nov. 16 to 22 Bullying Awareness Week.

"I'm impressed with the support I've received," Armstrong said.

Hayleigh, 7, was bullied twice by the same student in her Grade 2 class at McGowan Park elementary. One encounter occurred at school, the other at a friend's birthday party.

"The threats were she would be beaten up after school. As a parent, that really bothered me," said Armstrong.

Each confrontation made Hayleigh not want to go to school. Armstrong talked to her daughter's principal and teacher. Both were sympathetic and, after talking with the student's parents, the bullying stopped.

But Armstrong wanted to educate herself about bullies and bullying. She said she went online and discovered the website www.bullying.org.

The site offers courses on how to prevent bullying. Armstrong also found information on how to promote Bullying Awareness Week.

Now in its sixth year, Bullying Awareness Week was created by Canadian father and educator Bill Belsey, who promotes a creative, non-violent approach to stopping bullies.

Armstrong took the concept to McGowan Park and appeared in council chambers last week.

Mayor Terry Lake said he likes the idea of dedicating a week to stopping bullies. "It's a great way to bring awareness to this particular cause."

He said every parent deals with bullying. And preventing it benefits both bully and victim. "A lot of people who bully when they are young get into trouble later in life."

McGowan Park principal Carol Rimmer said the school is on board. Teachers will talk to students about speaking up for themselves and the importance of telling an adult when the bully doesn't stop.

"We're planning activities and a kick off where everybody wears pink," Rimmer said, referring to the symbolic anti-bullying colour.

Armstrong hopes her efforts will make a difference, if even for just one child.

"Unfortunately bullying is human nature and we don't do something until it happens to someone close to us," she said.