

Students urged to stand up to bullies

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If 400 people can co-operate and form a giant symbol of peace, they can do anything. That was the message for students and staff at Andover Elementary Community School when they got together to form the symbol as part of a week of anti-bullying activities held from Nov. 15th - 21st.



Students and staff at Andover Elementary Community School got together to form a human peace symbol as part of Anti-Bullying Awareness Week activities. About 400 individuals participated to make the statement.

"This is our peace symbol, saying that you are going to be peaceful citizens," Kathy Ester, guidance counsellor at the school, commented when the students got their first look at the photograph taken from the school roof. The picture was shown during Friday's 'Caught you caring' assembly that completed the week's activities.

"It shows that we can work together as a team," Ester added.

The assembly featured the presentation of student poems and short essays about the importance of standing up against bullying. Ester noted she didn't want to turn anyone away who wanted to speak so the list of participants was long. Authors included Bailey McFadden, Macy Pyres, Danielle Dickson, Courtney Sipprell, Chantal Gallant, Kayden Brown, Mihya Baker, Rachel Hathaway, Cassandra McCarthy, Natalie Kilcup, Lily Nadeau, Sydney Dionne, Sarah Swazey, Dyson Everett and Casey Paris.

"Don't be a bully. Stand up for yourself and your friends," Danielle Dickson affirmed. "Bullying hurts peoples' feelings and a lot of people don't like it. I feel that bullying is a matter that needs to be dealt with."

Some of the presentations were made in French and others in English. Bailey McFadden challenged others to take a stand against bullying as she intends to do.

"I stand up for others and I won't let other people get hurt," McFadden said. "My name is Bailey and I will not be bullied."

Students also presented a readers' theatre play that presented a three-point plan for dealing with bullying. Actors included Cody Spittle, Whitney Innis, Kaylea Spittle, Kurri Carter and narrator Ben Dee.

The assembly also included the presentation of a wall mural called 'Respect' that was signed by every student in the school. The collection of signatures represents the students' commitment to have a bully-free school and makes a promise that "Everyone has the right to be respected and the responsibility to respect others".

Students Alie Hanson, Gabrielle Savoy and Lily Nadeau sang Don't laugh at me.

Guests for the assembly included Cpl. Pierre Ayotte and Teena Solomon-Ouellette, community programs officer with the RCMP. Solomon-Ouellette commended the students on their performances and noted bullying remains an important topic.

"Every seven minutes, an incident of bullying takes place out on the playground and it happens in front of other people," Solomon-Ouellette said. "I'm glad to see you guys are all ready to take a stand against a problem that can be helped when everybody gets involved."

Additional activities held through the week included the use of lesson plans used throughout the curriculum. On Tuesday, a power-point presentation was given to each grade level by the guidance counsellor. On Wednesday, students took an anti-bullying pledge in their classrooms. Thursday was blue day where each student wore blue as a sign of peace and the group photograph was taken. Friday's assembly also included the presentation of a music video called United which encourages students to stick together to combat bullying.

Ref: <http://telegraphjournal.canadaeast.com/city/article/878393>

For more information about the annual National Bullying Awareness Week, see <http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org>.