
UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing



Student Writings
2014

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice



Table of Contents

Utah's Challenge 2

National Finalists

McCall Morris 5

Cora Rasmuson 8

National Runners Up

Brendon Ponte 12

Ali Zacher 18

State Finalists

Ethyn Ebell 21

Leigh Harris 23

Baylor Jepps 27

Kalleb Klenk 29

Kierian Lockwood 32

Alex Neibaur 34

Camden Snow 36

Lauren Wilson 38

Kaylee Yeschick 41

Honorable Mention

Elijah Arellano 45

Jessica Bliss 48

Hayden Brown 50

Rachel Burbidge 52

Avery Bethers 54

Ki McAllister 56

Brett Roundy 57

Matthias Tigner 58

Allyson Timpson 60

Jacki Sanudo 62

Kaden Ward 63

Keisha Williams 65

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice 68

Do the Write Thing 2014 VIP Judges

- Ciera Pekarcik
Miss Utah 2013
- Chief Chris Burbank
Salt Lake City Police Department
- Joel Devey
2012 National Finalist
- Ronald B. Gordon Jr., Executive Director
Utah Commission on Criminal & Juvenile Justice
- Judge Michelle Heward
Second District Juvenile Court
- Jeremy Holm
Bobsled Athlete – Head Coach of the U.S. Adaptive Bobsled Team
- Mayor Ben McAdams
Salt Lake County
- Payden Trujillo
2012 National Finalist
- Hope Woodside
Fox 13 News
- Holly Yocom
Utah Film Center
- Kathy Younker
Wheeler Foundation

Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee

- Spencer Larsen, Co-chair
- Nindy Le
- Van Nguyen
- Rachael Skidmore, Co-chair

Staff

- Reg Garff
- Jo Lynn Kruse
- Cuong Nguyen

UTAH'S FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

The Importance of the Do the Write Thing Challenge

The Do the Write Thing Challenge plays a key role in Utah's long-term strategy to end youth violence. These student writings make powerful proposals on how adults and community members can interrupt the causes of youth violence.

Utah's *Do the Write Thing Challenge* works in cooperation with the National Campaign to Stop Violence. The first step to end youth violence is to talk about it. The *Do the Write Thing Challenge* makes this initial step possible by creating a platform for youth, giving them a voice about how violence affects their lives and how it can be prevented. The program empowers young people in Utah and around the country to make a personal, written commitment to combat youth violence in their communities. The program works because it targets youth violence in the communities where violence takes place, then recognizes that the same communities hold the greatest power to create lasting solutions.

Utah's *Do the Write Thing Challenge* is sponsored locally by the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice (UBJJ) and managed by the UBJJ Youth Subcommittee. The Board monitors Utah's compliance with the core protections afforded in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) as reauthorized in 2002. The Board is also responsible for administering federal funds appropriated through the JJDP to fill gaps in the continuum of juvenile justice services, from prevention to treatment, with quality, evidence based programs. Members are appointed by Utah's Governor.

How the Campaign Works

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice sent information to all Utah school district superintendents and middle school principals and teachers encouraging them to involve their 7th and 8th grade students in the Challenge. Suggestions about how to tie the Challenge into course work are available online for teachers at <http://www.juvenile.utah.gov/writething.html>. Students can research youth violence as part of a history class, write a poem as part of an English class, or even consider youth violence from a social science perspective.

Following a classroom discussion about youth violence, students are asked to write answers to three questions:

How has youth violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

What can my community and I do to reduce youth violence?

School districts reported that more than 2,400 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence. Nearly 2,000 chose to submit essays for review. Students from the University of Utah, Utah State University and Weber State University participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top ninety writings. The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice then selected the top thirteen finalists, whose work was forwarded to Utah's VIP Judges for scoring. The VIP Judges had the difficult task of selecting a boy and girl national finalist along with runners up.

Utah's National Finalists will participate with other National Finalists at the *Do the Write Thing* National Recognition Ceremony in Washington DC this June. Finalists will meet with members of Utah's Congressional delegation to discuss the problem of youth violence. They will also attend a reception hosted by the Ambassador to the United States for the State of Kuwait. Finally, a book containing the students' writings will be placed in the Library of Congress.

Congratulations to all students that took the Challenge to do something about youth violence!

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice and the Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee thank the following for their generous support:

Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley
Foundation

Wheeler Foundation

Kuwait-America Foundation

National Campaign to Stop Violence

Southwest Airlines



UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

National Finalists

McCall Morris

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Kristy Searle**

Cora Rasmuson

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Brandee Bergum**

McCall Morris - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Kristy Searle

Anti Violence

How has violence affected my life? It has affected my life in many ways. Seeing people get picked on and people picking on me. Seeing people get picked on makes me mad because I know that the bullies has no right to do that. Every time I see it happening, I go and stick up for them because I know how it feels. It makes me feel like nothing and it puts me down.

The things people teased me the most about is my hearing aids and my biggest pet peeve, which is people touching my neck and face. I've been teased a lot about my hearing in lots of places. Bus rides home, school, and from my friends. When I was in elementary school this girl would tease me a lot about my hearing and say, "I can hear better than you, your deaf, and I'm better than you." She kept doing it a lot then one day I couldn't take it any more and I said "at least I'm not fat," because she was a little big, then from that day forward she never teased me again and I felt guilty for saying that to.

My friends would also pick on my brother and I because my brother has hearing aids to. We would go to their houses and when our hearing aid battery would die, they would say something mean and laugh because we couldn't hear them. My friends also would pick on me about my pet peeve. When I'm at school he would keep touching my face and neck and laugh about it and I keep trying to tell him to stop, but he won't. I want to loose him as a friend, but I'm worried I'll loose my other friends to. I'm hoping one day he'll figure it out because I'm avoiding him and not talking to him. When I get picked on I would always come home and be depressed and sometimes cry because you just hate every second of it. I'm so happy to have my family because they help me through the problems I have especially my brother because he always sticks up for me. I know if I ever need help I have my family to get through the problem.

What are the causes of youth violence? There are tons of cause like depression, stress, madness, loneliness, and the biggest one suicide. Suicide has been the biggest effect through my life. I had a friend named Buddy. I first met him at our first football practice since he made our team. Our football team had a great year together because we won the championship undefeated. After that we all went off and did out own thing. During the summer Buddy called my Dad because he was the head coach. Buddy tells how he's doing and how his summer has been going and told him he couldn't wait for football again. When next year came the boundaries changed, so we couldn't play with each other. Buddy's team didn't make it to the playoff and we made it to the playoff and championship. He came to both games and he was still a brother to out team. We won the championship and he had the biggest smile on his face while we celebrated.

A month or a couple of months later my dad sits my brother and I on the couch. My dad said to us while crying, "Buddy committed suicide." I look over to my brother and he's already crying and I'm sitting there thinking there's no way and then I knew it was true. I cried for the whole rest of the night and the next day. I was at school sitting in the auditorium then I got sent to the councilors office. As soon as I walked in I see my friend crying and I knew why, because of Buddy's death. He was crying because he read in a book that a guy put a gun to his and killed himself. My friend, brother, and I are sitting in the councilors office crying and the councilors are trying their hardest to help. The councilors let us call the rest of our football team down and we decided to write great things about Buddy and our favorite memory with him

Then the funeral came in the winter. We gave the parents the book we created and dirt from football because our football team would smell the grass before and after the games because the best way to memorize something is by smell. So everybody is sitting in the church listening to people speak about Buddy. Then the bishop goes up and talked about why and what happened about Buddy's death. The bishop said, "Buddy committed suicide because he was being bullied at school. He would always go home and say I'm being bullied and they won't stop. His mother had been trying so hard to stop it by getting him into a new school and talked to the principle about it, but nothing worked. Then one day Buddy goes up to his mom and said he was fine, they stopped because he knew how hard his mother was trying to help.

A month later the parents hear a bang and the parents start running to the sound and they find Buddy laying there on the ground with a bullet in his head, and a note laying there right next to him. The note said who the bullies were at school. Buddy's dad tries to stop the bleeding coming out of his head because he was still alive. Buddy got life flighted to the hospital. His parents drive up there and the bishop meets them there. When the bishop goes and sees them he says he's sorry, then sees Buddy's Dad with blood in his hand. The bishop said lets go get you cleaned up and the Dad said this is all I have left. They go and clean up and wait. The doctors came out and said he not going to make it. That was the whole story the bishop told.

Then my Dad got up and talked. He said, "he was the best football player on the line. He doesn't know how he got bullied because he was bigger then the kids." He also said, "I gave the football team an assignment and that assignment was to give thirteen compliments a day since Buddy was thirteen and us football teammates accepted it." Also my Dad said, "he should of known because of the phone call in the summer and him coming to our football games. My dad also said to the team, "if your ever in need were a phone call away." That was the end of his speech. See bullying doesn't effect that one person it effects everybody, so don't bully.

What can I do to stop youth violence? I can do lots of things, especially with help of people. The parents and football kids set up a Be A Buddy, Not A Bully foundation. We do lots of things about bullying, like handing out Be A Buddy, Not A Bully bracelet. My Dad hands out papers that have quotes on them to football team and I take the quotes into my daily life and try to let others know. Here's an example by John F. Kennedy, "Things do not happen. Things are made to happen." I try to take that quote and let others know because you can make bullies stop by doing something than not doing anything. I joined Student Body Officers so I could be a good example and help stop bullying more. The SBO really want to focus on Buddy week because that's most important to the teacher and us.

I also want everybody to know nothing is impossible. Muhammad Ali said, "impossible is just a bid word thrown around small men who find it easier to live the world they've been given to than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing." Muhammad Ali said you can do anything, so don't do nothing to help yourself or someone being bullied.. Mia Hamm said. "I've worked to hard and too long to let anything stand in the way of my goal. I will not let my teammates down and I will not let myself down." Don't let anyone ruin your life or future. Know that your great and the people around you know your great.

Another thing is try to figure out why their bullying because you don't know what could be going on with them. They could have trouble with something and you could help to make him/her a better person. I try to tell my Dad football speeches because it helps me and my football teammates out a lot. He says, "hang out with the right people, do the right thing because it's easy to do the wrong thing, but hard to do the right thing, and get you school work done." If you hang out with the wrong people it will set you on a bad path. If you hang out with the right people it will put you on the good path. Also you'll be a good person and have great people around, instead of being bad and have bad people around you. Know there's always a way to stop bullying and if you can't do it alone you have those great friends or family to help you. You always have somebody to help you. Your not alone in this world.

Cora Rasmuson - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Brandee Bergum

Youth Violence

We were all young once. From the very start we were told that we were loved, that we were smart, beautiful, unique, and perfect even. I grew up like that. I was constantly being told I had worth, and I believed it. After believing something like that for your whole life, it's hard to tell yourself you don't have those values. Someone else will tell you before you get the chance to tell yourself. Youth violence isn't necessarily a matter of fistfights or being physically hurt, it also has to do with the damage that is done to you on the inside. What people say will always hurt the most.

Sixth grade was probably my hardest year, socially. I was beginning to find out who I was and why I was stuck here. My friends had decided I wasn't pretty or popular enough. They told me I shouldn't be doing the activities I was doing, or liking the things I liked. When someone puts you down like that, it's hard to pick yourself back up again. I was beginning to let myself fall in that dark hole of self-pity. That's when I knew I had to find friend. A friend who respected what I did and someone who respected me for who I was.

Middle school was coming up and I knew it was going to be hard. Even harder without a friend to be there for me. I had to make the hard decision and choose the path I really wanted. Still at war with myself it took a while to choose. I ditched the popular girls who didn't respect me for who I was. All of those things you take for granted, you don't really know you had them until they are gone. I tried to hide my feelings and honestly, I was pretty successful. I felt alone and didn't realize all of the amazing friends I had around me. Things were getting better, I was making new friends and getting my interest back in all of the things I loved. I am a completely different person today than I was two years ago.

I could be classified as someone who has been a victim of youth violence. I have no scars on the outside but to this day, I still have scars on the inside and they probably won't ever heal. Looking back, I may have had a rough time but I don't regret what I did yesterday or last year per say, because my choices made me who I am today. That hard decision I made could very well be one of the most important

decisions I have ever made. If I took the easy way out I could be a different person and probably not a person I would be proud of knowing.

There's always going to be some one to judge you whether it is because of your actions, your looks, your smarts. For me, I was under the impression that I wasn't pretty. Those girls had decided that learning about anatomy and being smart wasn't considered feminine. This is my case, and I now realize that just like how every person is unique, same goes for bullies. No bully will be like another. They'll say and do different things and it will affect their victim uniquely as well. Something I have found in common with all these bullies is that they will judge you on our talents or abilities. Dumbledore once said, "It is our choices, Harry, that make us who we truly are, far more than our abilities. "

Whatever you are being judged by, just remember what your parents and loved ones told you growing up. You are *smart*, you are *beautiful*, you have so much potential. It's true. If you keep telling yourself that you aren't those things, you wont be. Even with all that extra weight on your shoulders, you still have to *believe*. With a little bit of faith you can perform miracles. Believe in yourself and cure cancer. Muster up all that courage you can and go skydiving. With that flicker of faith and courage somewhere inside, you can accomplish more than you thought possible. Once again, I have to say that no matter what you become, there will still be that one person who is there to judge you.

I read a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson and I base my life off of it almost daily: "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment." The world will tell you that you have to do this, you have to do that. Or don't do this, don't do that. But I say, do what you think is best for you. Is it best for your reputation? Or is it best for you? If it is best for *you*, excel at it. Don't go out into the world looking for someone to copy, be that person that other people will want to copy. Be *you*. Do what makes you happy. Have courage in yourself and be not afraid of what could be lurking in the corner.

I couldn't have gotten through my challenges or life even, if it weren't for courage. That tight, knotted feeling burning in your gut is telling you to stand up for

yourself. Even if you stand alone, stand tall and say, "You know what? I have worth and no matter what you say or do can take that away."

Sometimes we'll ask, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" or "Why me?" As the years have gone by I have matured much, and I have learned to accept my trials with open arms. I didn't saying it's easy to get through, nor am I guaranteed to enjoy it but those trials have strengthened me as a person. Those trials reveal my weak spots, that's when I go in and build armor around them so I can be stronger and more protected. Next time, it wont be as easy to damage that part of me again. The way I got through those challenges made me who I am today.

You can get out of your bully situation if you have the courage and faith to do it. Find someone who you know is your friend and be your own little army. If you don't have someone, listen to that voice at the end of the tunnel that's telling you to keep going. Even if it's scary, keep going. You are almost there. Stand up for yourself and tell the bully that you aren't a wimp like they tell you, but tell them that you are strong, that you are smart; you are unique, that you have potential.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Runners Up

Brendon Ponte

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Brandee Bergum**

Ali Zacher

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kim Irvine**

Brendon Ponte - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Brandee Bergum

People all over the world are taking place in youth violence whether it's bullying, being bullied, a bystander, or even being in a gang. People all over the world are being shied out, shunned, physically hurt, mentally hurt and even verbally hurt by bullies or gangs. Nobody deserves that kind of stuff going on in their life. And I am here writing this paper to take a stand against youth violence. I've been bullied a lot throughout my life and it sucks and nobody should have to go through that kind of stuff. And this is my story....

When I was around three years old I had an incident where I ran into the corner of a door and split my head open. I went to the doctors and had to get eighty-four stitches to sew it all back up. And when the first day of preschool came I had to go there with this big band-aid across my forehead and while all the other kids came I would just get weird faces people would stare at me, they didn't know any better though they were just little. A lot of them came up to me and asked me what happened which made me feel uncomfortable because I didn't want to remember what happened that night but I told them. They just laughed and called me names. And that kind of stuff sticks with people their whole life. I didn't have many friends that year, or the one after that, or the one after that. Because I looked funny, but there were those few kids that still liked me because they actually took the time to get to know me. And I will always admire those kids, the kids that stuck up for me all those years. Any kid with the heart to be able to do that for someone should be cherished all their life. Because its not easy to do a lot of the time, you end up feeling split between fitting in and being a freak. But when you stick up for someone that doesn't quite "fit in" that just means you have a bigger heart than the rest of the people. When I finally got to 2nd grade my family decided to move to Herriman. And that was my chance.

A new fresh start, my scar had healed a little more by then. It was less noticeable I mean. But I forgot that my teeth were still yellow. I was born with it though, when I was born I had a lot of infections that occurred when I was only a few months old. I was prescribed a medication that would treat my infections away but it was bad for your teeth, I still took it till my infections were gone and by that time my teeth had become yellow but I was finally healthy and that's what mattered. On the first day at the new school it

was still a disaster, I was still made fun of for my scar and my teeth. But now it was getting physical. People would come beat me up before and sometimes after school. There were also rumors, lots of stupid untrue rumors. I got in trouble for hitting the kid that would hit me but the teachers understood so I didn't get in huge trouble. My parents were divorced when I was little, but I was old enough to have some great memories about when they were together which really hurt when I thought about them being together again. After 5th grade things started to settle down, people were being nicer to me, occasionally I'd get a few rude comments but I was starting to become numb to their words. Because I knew, someone out there actually cares about me. And every day all day I would think to myself, "is this ever going to end? How many other people have to go through this? Will I make it through?" there are kids that go through those things or even worse every day. These things are what drive people to depression, anxiety attacks, self-harm, or even suicide. It was in 7th grade where people finally got me to crack, I went through depression, I cut, I- it was just unbelievable, the amount of pain and the names and labels that ran crazily through my head. And I made the mistake of not telling anyone about it. Nobody knew the things I was going through, I kept it all laid back behind the fake smile I wore all day. I eventually decided to myself that I was going to get through this, I was determined and I knew I could overcome depression if I gave it my all. And I did, everyday I would say "hi," to someone new, and become friends with them. I would tell myself that I was worth something to the world. And by the end of 7th grade I was finally happy and the air around me didn't feel damp and cold. I could talk to people, and feel good about myself.

That was the day I vowed to myself if anyone was falling into depression I'd do anything I could to help them before it was too late. And I have had so many people come to me asking for help, I have had friends of my friends who didn't even know me come to me because their friend recommended me for help. And I have never failed to make someone happy and get their mind straightened up. Every thank you I received was the thing that made me happiest. I've always loved to make others happy.

Lots of people get caught up in youth violence whether they are in gangs, being bullies, bystanding, or the ones being bullied. And it's not fair, just because some kid decides to ruin someone's life by bullying them doesn't mean they should have to go through depression. Gangs are just wrong, you know that there is always at least one kid that was pressured into joining a gang and if he/she hadn't joined they would be successful in life.

So not only do gangs do crime and misbehave, they are ruining peoples lives too. It's awful to think about how many people in the world would turn out really successful if they hadn't partaken in youth violence, and for some they were forced into youth violence. I think of bullying as a circle, or a chain. Because you start off with a kid that is probably going through life with bad parenting, and then they turn into a bully and bully others to get their satisfaction, then the kid that was being bullied either turns to depression after a while, or gets so angry that they start to bully so that kids can feel their pain, and their feelings toward life intensify either positively or negatively. But I want to take a moment to recognize the word "bully." Because what is a bully? Most people think it's when someone calls them names or physically hurts them etc. But that isn't always the case, because almost everyone has had a bad day and done something that they have regretted the day after. And that's what happens sometimes. Someone is just having a horrible day and they accidentally blow a fuse and call someone a mean name, or hurt them. And then they regret it, that's not a bully, that is just a kid having a bad day. We don't know what's going through that kids mind, maybe he is just tired of all the stress and maybe he is even being bullied.

Most of the reasons why people bully others are: Home problems- where they are either ignored from their families, or they are being parented badly. But siblings can also cause the kid to bully. Another common one is School problems- where the kid is having difficulty in school, maybe they are flunking classes, or have a big project due soon, people from school giving them a hard time, these all can cause enormous amounts of stress which can cause bullying. Or just the Everyday reasons- where they are just having a bad day, or they missed their bus, or that kind of bad luck things. Anxiety is a big one too. And one of the bigger ways a bully is made is through the first day of school, we all know how it is, you try to dress nice And make a good first impression and when something bad happens on that first day you get all stressed and worried. Ya, that first day. People get so caught up in what other people think of them that it starts to cause them to do stupid things that normally they wouldn't even think about doing. And we are so afraid of being labeled that some of us start to bully others that way they seem on top of all the others. But sometimes the person that is making fun of you doesn't even realize they are hurting you, it's not common but it does happen. So speak up and make sure that they know your feelings are being hurt, and if they stop they will say sorry, that's not a bully either. A bully is where they make fun of you not one day, not two days, but when they continuously bully you. That a bully. Everyone has their bad

days, and sometimes we can be jerks during those days, but that doesn't mean we are bullies, we are just going through a bad day is all, just make sure you apologize for everything you did wrong. Going back to the 6th grade for a moment because I want to show you a good example of what I'm talking about.

A kid named Josh made fun of me one day not physically but verbally. But as the next day came, when I was at school out at recess playing a big soccer game as usual. Josh was sitting up on the hill watching us play soccer he was alone though, so after I got a break I walked up the hill and asked him to come play soccer with us. He looked up at me bewildered that I had offered him to hang out with me after he had teased me and called me names. He asked me, "Why do you want to be with me if I was mean to you yesterday?" I told him, "Because you look down, and forget about yesterday, you didn't hurt me today, so come on lets just go play some soccer." He said thank you and he apologized for yesterday and we played soccer together every day after that. He pulled me over one day and asked me for help, because all the kids would get past him and he could never really kick the ball well. And so I said I would help him and I really did. I coached him and was teaching him everything I knew. At first he was always the last pick for the teams, but after me and him were done with lessons he made it to the top 10 picks almost every time. He and I had become best friends and he had become a great soccer player. That story just proves that you should be nice to everyone, no matter what they have done in the past. Because you just don't know them yet or how they react when they are put with other people they don't know.

When you see a bully bullying someone what do you think you should do? That's right, tell an adult. That's the common case, but what happens when your just out alone and you see a random person being bullied and there are no adults around? Then what do you do? You got to get the guts to go up and talk to the bully, don't throw a punch or anything. But be sure to get in front of the person being bullied. Stand up for him/her because they don't deserve to be left alone like that, no one does. Because when the bully sees you sticking up for the kid he /she was bullying they are most likely going to step off and go away. Because bullies only target the kids that are left out, self-dependant, down all the time, and the ones that are unsure about themselves. Because a bully's objective is to make the person feel bad about themselves or to make the bully themselves feel better than the others. And for all the parents out there, that have a child that is bullying someone don't just punish the kid, that will just make them worse, sit them down and talk to

them. State why bullying is so bad. If they require special classes to deal with their bullying problem like anger management, therapy, or counseling then it is your job as a parent to do whatever you can to get them into those classes. And if you know that life at home is rough for them then you should have a talk with your family to make him/her feel more comfortable at home make them happy to be home. If they are into animals try to get them a pet that they like, because a lot of the time a bully just needs a friend, that's why sometimes a bully will try to bully others into becoming their friend. But that isn't real friendship. And real friendship is what they need. A friend can really change someone, and their perception on life.

For those that have read The Outsiders. Remember how Johnny Cade was hated and unappreciated by his own family? And how once he had told Ponyboy that he wanted to just die and end all his pain? But Pony and the gang were his only friends, but they brought Johnny enough happiness to keep him alive. It changed Johnny's mind about dying. That's one example of how friends are a big impact on someone's willingness to live.

People being bullied deserve a lot of help as well. They didn't ask for this burden of being bullied. It just happened to fall on him. And anyone being bullied needs help, you can be a person with a great self-esteem level but bullying will still be troublesome to you, a friend sticking up for you is a great way to help. But when you are being bullied you can't get out of it yourself. And the feelings a bully can make you feel about yourself, sometimes a friend can get you over those feelings but sometimes they can't. sometimes counseling or therapy is needed to overcome those feelings. Because feelings and emotions can be really powerful a lot of the time. And parents, I cannot stress enough over pointing out to you that if you have a child being bullied you cannot just use sympathy. You need to spend quality time with them. Just forget that they are being bullied for a second, spend time with them because you love them and wont be able to have this time with them forever, not just for sympathy.

Family is key, to everyone even if their problems don't even happen at home or with the family. Family can bring happiness, it can make someone forget about all their problems to enjoy the time with the family. And when problems aren't flowing through the mind it the kid can ease down. The mind can cause loss of sleep and lots of other problems. Sleep can help a lot when it comes to bullying or stress or being bullied a lot of problems really. I have sleeping issues to where I am only getting 6 or less hours of sleep every night because I am constantly worrying about schoolwork or friends or even family. I almost never have a clear mind.

I want to emphasize the idea of venting. Venting is a HUGE help when it comes to bullying or stress that can lead up to more serious issues. Because some kids can just start listing through all their problems and get it all off their chest, and that is fantastic because that feeling is amazing. But then there are the kids like me that just have a hard time letting out anything at all. It's so hard for us because we have kept it hidden so long from everyone. We just fake a smile and keep all of our emotions hidden behind it. It takes a lot to get over the walls we have put up in our minds where we have been keeping all of our emotions. But it is possible, it just takes someone that is willing to give it all they got and to stay with it the whole time. And I want to take some time to thank all the people out there that stick with helping others and don't just give up when the going gets tough. Thank you.

“when someone cries it is not a symbol of weakness, but a sign that they have been strong for too long.” - [REDACTED]

This, is my paper against youth violence. And I want it to be heard. I want to take a stand against youth violence and stop it where it stands today. Thank you to everyone out there that has tried to help and are helping stop youth violence. I hope this paper helps.

Ali Zacher - 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

From Feared to Afraid.

I was sitting in class on another average day at school and I was very bored because our school counselor was here to show us that stupid bullying presentation. Again. I didn't know what they thought was gonna change if they came in, showed that same slides and told us about the same people over and over and over again.

I never thought to listen to those presentations anyway. I was sure they didn't apply to me, but as the counselor was rambling on in a constant, lifeless voice about teen suicide and how it's caused by bullies, something deep inside my brain made me look at the slides and listen to her boring words.

It's like my brain finally had enough of my vanity, being so sure I was a hero instead of a villain because for the first time since about first grade, I heard every word she said and suddenly, it felt like every eye in the class was glued to me because as she named off traits of a bully, they all matched me. But I never felt like a bully. And the things I said to people...I would have laughed if it made them feel bad at all because they wouldn't affect me. But they did affect them.

At recess that day, I watched them as they sulked around the field and sat alone by the empty foursquare box. The thing was, that wasn't normal for them. They were the ones that were always happy and joyful. And maybe that's why I didn't like them because I'd never had a real family, I'd lived with an abusive father and a family that was constantly at war with each other, I'd raised my sister from the day she could talk and I'd never gotten a family like I assumed they had... nut now they were worse than I was. The things I said to them, they were taking them to heart and for the first time in a long time, I felt like I was going to cry.

I thought back to the stories of people younger than I was, taking their own lives because someone had bullied them until they couldn't take it anymore. And how would I know what was going on in someone's house? I didn't even know their names, so for all I knew, they had it worse than I did. After that, I completely stopped talking to them and they slowly where happy again. I wish I'd said sorry to them, but I could never beat down my ego for long enough to push my pride to the side and usher a simple apology for months of bullying, but I still wish I had. And

*I wish I could take it all back because I now realize **I was a bully...***

Today, as a teenager, I see youth violence everywhere I go. And I can't stop it, but I try my best to be the friend to any person that needs one. I've seen bullying from the playground, all the way to the confines of my own home and like a ball in the hands of a pro, it can be thrown at you in many different ways.

I've never been bullied...or maybe I have and I've never taken the time to notice, but I have *been* the bully and the way that's affected me is now, my biggest fear in the world, above anything is being the reason someone kills themselves. Perhaps that's a good thing though, now I'll never take the chance and hurt another person ever again.

Maybe now, I can be the hero instead of the villain.

"as you bully them, you'll cause them pain but once they're gone you will never be the same," – unknown.

The cause of youth violence is pain and hatred and for me, jealousy. When you resent a person enough, you suddenly hate them enough to try and hurt them. It could also be force of habit. If they're raised being bullied by their family, their parents, even other children, then there's only a certain amount of gentle that you can find in a person that is surrounded by violence, and even though they might be nice people, it's only their instinct making them mean.

The way we can stop youth violence is be a friend to everyone who needs one, even if they don't seem like they want one, if their alone, they almost always don't want to be. Even if they won't accept your friendship, or for some deluded reason you won't accept theirs, just be nice. Smile at someone who's down and maybe sit by them at lunch if their alone. Even waving, saying hello is a graceful approach to a world without bullying.

'Don't you worry your pretty little mind, people throw rocks at things that shine...' –unknown.

Suicide: My biggest fear.

If you catch me lying awake at night,

Don't bother to ask if I'm alright,

Because I'm fine.

I'm just thinking of the lives that I saved that day when I decided to change my ways

And as the moon moves across the sky

I think of the people that might have died and I'm glad that I'm now scared of suicide,

Because I have a fear above all else,

A fear so wide,

It covers the dark and buries death alive,

More than I fear the demons behind my own eyes,

I'm afraid that one day I'll be the reason someone dies.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

State Finalists

Ethyn Ebell

**8th Grade, Desert Hills Middle School
Teacher, Jennifer Lyman**

Leigh Harris

**7th Grade, Draper Park Middle School
Teacher, Kimberly Carter**

Baylor Jeppsen

**7th Grade, Draper Park Middle School
Teacher, Whitney Lee**

Kalleb Klenk

**7th Grade, West Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Stacey H. Sawyer**

Kierian Lockwood

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kim Irvine**

Alex Neibaur

**7th Grade, Draper Park Middle School
Teacher, Kimberly Carter**

Camden Snow

**8th Grade, Desert Hills Middle School
Teacher, Elise Shepherd**

Lauren Wilson

**7th Grade, Draper Park Middle School
Teacher, Kimberly Carter**

Kaylee Yeschick

**8th Grade, South Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Dianne Crabtree**

Ethyn Ebell - 8th Grade
Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Jennifer Lyman

Bullying

Bullying. A serious thing. Many people have committed suicide, done some sort of self harm, gotten into trouble, and a lot more. Let me tell you a story about me. It all started in 6th grade.

People weren't so nice. Automatically, out of nowhere, there were rumors about me. I was "gay". I was a "hardcore drugee". People that I didn't even know, started spreading rumors about me. It really didn't mean much at first.

I hung out with a group of depressed friends that cut. I started cutting too. It didn't mean anything at first. I just wanted to fit in with them. After a little while, I heard people talk about me. They looked at me and laughed.

It started hurting. People I knew since the first grade, were calling me gay. A drugee. I got depressed. everywhere I went, people said something rude about me. I started cutting for a reason then. Every little scar from then on, was from something someone said.

It hurt even worse that my family didn't care to pay attention to me. I never had a male figure in my life. To raise me. To go hunting with me. I never had that. I never had the experience a lot of people did.

My mother called herself fat and it hurt that she thought that way. She cried every night. She was alone. It didn't make me feel good. I had family problems, school, and friends to deal with. I got depressed. I really did. It never stopped to this day. After all of that depression, I got into drugs. I smoked marijuana, cigarettes, and cigars. I was curious, and people told me it would take the pain away. Marijuana did. I started stealing things. Eventually, I got caught stealing. I got around 55 hours of community service from stealing two times.

With all of my other problems to deal with, that didn't help, that made it worse. I was on the ground. I went to school crying. Eventually I stopped. I gave up. I didn't really feel. Music was my only escape. Music was the only thing I looked forward to in life. I tried to commit suicide 3 times. One was only a few months ago. I then realized something. I can help other people with this.

I realized I trapped myself in this little box filled with all the negative things people had told me or I had heard. If I could just realize I was stuck in that box, I could leave. I stopped smoking. I stopped cutting. I'm around 1 month clean. Instead of thinking of all the hatred I got, I thought, why should I care? I know I'm not gay. I stopped doing drugs. I am a better kid now. So why should I care if it's not true? That's right, I shouldn't. As long as I have one real friend who's going to be there for me through everything, I'll be great. I needed to realize all the wonderful things and people there are in my life.

So I decided to change. I started helping people. Because I hate when people are sad. when they cry. When they are so depressed, they cut their beautiful skin, cry their beautiful tears,

and have that beautiful blood pour down. I decided to help everyone that was sad as much as I could. And that is what's made me a better kid today.

Bullying is something to be taken seriously. If someone is sad, do whatever you can to help, or stand up for them. Everybody needs a friend. Even when they're smiling, don't think they're always happy. Do the right thing, and stand up for the kid being bullied. Whether it's cyber bullying, physical bullying, or mental bullying.

Leigh Harris - 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Kimberly Carter

You never thought you would be the victim. Although you have heard stories on the news, articles in the newspaper, and even documentaries about it; you never thought you would be a victim of youth violence. The voices ring in your ears, the yelling seems endless. What are they yelling at you for? The pressure the others are putting on you is unbearable. The looks that you get when you walk in the halls, the snarls or the discourteous laughs you hear when they glance at you. When you hear “youth violence”, you might think of the stereotypical “a kid getting hit by another kid”, but it’s much more than that. Bringing a weapon to school, peer pressure, cyberbullying, or threatening someone are just a few things that fall into youth violence.

I’ve never been severely bullied, of course called a name or two, but I had a friend who was. Her name was Alexis. I met her in the 6th grade. She was one who never really talked much. Alexis was always very happy, sometimes she just had a different way of showing it. She might have squealed and jumped excitedly, but people took it wrong. They thought she was weird and she wasn’t like the rest of us. But she was just being herself, which I had no problem with. Every once in a while I would hear a conversation of how someone had to sit by Alexis. They would always talk about she smelled bad or that she was acting odd. Alexis knew she was different, she really did. Eventually she did hear that kids had been talking about her, and she became very sensitive. It made me realize how some people had no idea they were hurting her, even if they weren’t bullying her directly.

Have you ever wondered where the bully gets their violence from? They obviously have something going on in their personal life that is hurting them so they hurt others. A child could have poor parenting or even been abused at a young age. From day one, violence has been their only answer. The bully might have been teased, gossiped about, or even physically or emotionally hurt

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Have you ever wondered where the bully gets its violence from? They obviously have something going on in their personal life that is hurting them so they hurt others. A child could have poor parenting or even been abused at a young age. From day one, violence has been their only answer. The bully might have been teased, gossiped about, or even physically or emotionally hurt

before. They may have let it slide and not get to them, but then their anger builds up and they let it out on others. Sometimes, this is not always the case. Some kids don't let their anger out on others. They take it out on themselves, thinking it's their fault. They may self harm and let the pain leak out, some may even get to the point of committing suicide. The child may have been exposed to drugs and alcohol which put a lot of stress on their life, thinking it will relieve them from the everyday demanding life. Media plays a huge part in youth violence. Video games and movies influence the use of weapons and drugs like it's nothing. Cyberbullying contributes so much to the youth violence world. We can basically leave any anonymous hate on anyone without them knowing who you are. You could be threatened by anyone, and no one could take the blame.

If we want to keep our youth out of any type of violence we must thoroughly educate them the consequences and risks of youth violence. We need to spread the word of never being silent. Whether you're the victim or the bully yourself, we need to tell everyone it is never okay to bully someone no matter what the case is. We must tell them to speak up for others and themselves if any type of violence occurs in their community. A bully is like a virus. It spreads through out kids and teaches them to solve their problems with violence. When a bully find it's victim, not only do they hurt them, but they may even spread the virus to them. Stop the virus by reporting any bullying happening to you or anyone in your school or community. Even if you don't know the victim, you must report it instantly. Are you afraid of the bully him or herself? Have they bullied you in the past, and you are in constant fear of going back to those painful days? Think of it this way. If you wouldn't want to relive the pain of being bullied, neither would the victim. By standing up for the victim, you could show just how bad the bully could hurt someone. Even the

person who contributes the pain needs a friend. Become the bully's friend and show them how they could change. YOU can stop the virus.

Violence is something that should be eliminated from our society. It may take a long time for everyone to come together to put an end to this, but if we come hand in hand and solve this among everyone, we could permanently put an end to violence for our communities. I feel that my generation will be the change. I feel that we are more self aware of our actions. The more self aware of things we do, the world around us will too. As small as you may think you may be, you could start a ripple. If you think no one is listening, someone will. You could start a chain reaction for everyone. You could be the voice. Speak up, never be afraid of who you really are, and spread the word of nonviolence. As Margaret Mead said "Never doubt a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Baylor Jeppsen - 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Whitney Lee

A Shortcut Called Violence

When most people imagine a utopia, they think of a perfect world where nothing goes wrong. When I think of a utopia, I imagine a place where violence is unheard of. This doesn't just mean that there are no fights or nobody is bullied. My utopia is also a place where people stick together to do good. The stories of prejudice like when Hitler killed millions of Jews and when the Ku Klux Klan wiped out villages of other races make me shake my head. I believe the opposite of war is not peace, but kindness. Many people feel like they are doing a good thing by simply not being rude to a person who is being hurt by someone else, verbally or physically. But really, if they don't do anything, the silent observer is just as bad if not worse than the abuser. So if you ever see someone struggling, don't just sit there and do nothing. Take action and make sure whoever is being hurt know they can trust you. This could change a person's life. Once you've started finding a way to help people, others will join you. One million starts with one. So be the one who is an example to others.

When people steal, lie, or even kill, they almost always do this for personal gain. These people use violence as a shortcut to gaining what they want. Although they may get what they want for a short time, ultimately people choosing a road of violence regret this choice. "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent." - Mahatma Ghandi. I think I can help prevent violence by sticking up for kids who are bullied, so they don't start doing actions like their attackers. I can also prevent violence by telling people to stop hurting others and by being kind to them. If everybody was nice to a bully these kids would eventually give in to this good kind of peer pressure and start being kind to more people. 12% of youth in America admitted to having been in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months. If people are getting into fights while they are in school, where there are adults supervising them, imagine the amount of violence outside of school, when nobody is there to stop them. This is why we must never be rude to anybody or discriminate anyone.

Because I have been lucky and have never been the victim of violence or abuse, I wanted to get insight as to why people do these things and what they thought violence could provide for them. So I asked my favorite coach what his experiences with violence were and why people would do those bad things. Because he grew up in Southern California gangs, he had a lot of experience with youth violence. He said most of the violence he witnessed was because of drugs. Sometimes it would be stupid things that people would try to do to get drugs, and other times it would be stupid things that they would do after they had used drugs. The times that the violence wasn't because of drugs would sometimes be because people were too prideful. If something happened to them, even on accident, they would freak out and do something to hurt whoever "disrespected" them. The other main reason

people would use violence is because they thought they gained respect if they did something bad like beating someone up. They thought this made them look tough. My coach told me that everybody who did this lived a sad life. As his friends chose violent actions, they regretted this soon after. Many of these people went to jail. Others died.

There are many reasons why youth may turn to violence. They could be pressured into violence, they could have done drugs to make them feel like violence is ok, they may just be stressed or depressed, and they just might not know anything else. But no matter the reason, it is not an ok choice. Violence can ruin not just the victim's life forever, but also their families', and anybody else who knows them. If everybody acted together to reduce the violence, or even better end it forever, there would be less suicides, less sadness, and more importantly, more joy throughout the world. All it takes is a couple of people to start sticking up for others, and very quickly an entire school could change. Before long, the whole nation could be doing this! So ask yourself, have you stood by when another person was being hurt? If so, take action and become one of the people who represents kindness.

Kalleb Klenk - 7th Grade
West Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Stacey H. Sawyer

Two And A Half Years

It was a little more than two and a half years ago when he left. The kid I once knew had completely changed. He was a tall, muscular, tan kid. He was my best friend. He told me he was gay about four years before this happened, but it was two years ago he told everybody.

He faced mental and physical bullying, which later lead to suicidal thoughts and actions. He was called a "faggot", then he tried to move past it and posted a picture on instagram of him and his boyfriend holding hands. People gave him male prostitute cards as well as jock straps. He was jumped in an alley not long after the picture was posted.

All the sudden suicidal thoughts and actions came into place. He had over 500 scars from cutting himself, as well as burn marks. Then summer hit and he was a brand new person, he didn't care, and moved on. He just was himself again, that person I didn't see for two and a half years came back. Then as soon as he came, he went back except this time he went for the worst. On March 21st I received a text message, it was from him basically saying goodbye. At the very end he mentioned a famous Eminem quote "when I'm gone just carry on, no more rejoice, and every time you hear the sound of my voice, just know that I'm

looking down on you smiling, and I didn't feel a thing so baby don't feel my pain just smile back". I rushed to his house to find the paramedics there loading him into the ambulance. At 3:12 A.M. March 22nd the doctors said the bleach reached his liver and he died.

I changed that day, I said on instagram "the world has just lost a wonderful person; he will be forever missed and cherished in our memories". My other friend and I are basically brothers now because he lives with me. Every time we go out in public we dress and act gay in memory of him. Sure we have got dirty looks and interesting comments but it is worth it, to know we are standing up for something that is looked past. The song Same Love by Macklemore was a movement in the right path to not legalize gay rights but it at least helped the bullying.

To this day he is always in my heart as well as others. Every day at 2:30 I say a prayer for him. Two and a half years ago I watched someone change because of physical bullying and it needs to stop before more nice, fun, loving people kill/harm themselves. "It's hard to watch people change, but it's harder to remember who they used to be"-anonymous. Physical and verbal bullying needs to stop; every day at least one person kills themselves because of physical or

verbal bullying. The only way this can stop is if people can grow up and realize what they have done.

Kierian Lockwood – 8th Grade
 South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kim Irvine

Standing up when you're on your knees...

"Hey there beautiful," he said as sarcasm spilled out his mouth. I stepped back letting my head fall and bangs cover my face. "Oh the cute one doesn't want to talk to me? She must think she's so strong," He said cruelly and harshly wanting to rip his way into my soul. I felt the warm salty tears on my lips; I hadn't realized I was crying. "Oh Kieriano thinks..." He said annoyingly but I had tuned him out, I can't believe he used that moronic nickname. I snapped; I looked up and stuttered "Leave me alone." He look surprised but then wide grin appeared on his face twisted with hatred "Now why would I do that?" I moved my bangs and scowled at his words and snapped at him, "Why should you not? All you're doing is proving that I'm stronger than you and you can't touch me so say that again, build my wall," I screamed the last part. I was tired of him, I watched him as he stepped back letting the words sink in. I walked away slamming my shoulder into his as I passed. "Thanks for your kind words," I muttered. I'd done it, I continued the circle. I went from bullied to being the bully with just a few words.

Now as we grow we hear about youth violence. What is it really? Is it a punch on a shoulder from a friend? No it's the words that dig into your soul, the punches that bruise and break. It's the blood that fills your mouth as you walk a deserted plain. It is the thing that makes us want to cry alone in solitude. Now as we walk the blood spilling and words pounding they start to gather and grow forcing you to look down and walk alone. Did you know according to DoSomething.org that as you walk one in four teachers will brush it off, even if they see the cause of this pain! All of the people who talk about "prevention" and one-fourth no longer care.

Standing alone in the halls,
 All of the people you have learned about,
 They turned to bullies with just a few words.
 There was a cause,
 A childhood friend gone bad.
 A few secrets and a guy you liked.
 Even he's against you now.
 Did you ever mean anything?
 Will they ever notice you care?
 Have they already noticed?
 Is that why they push it on?
 Will they stop knowing that you don't care?
 Have they ever been so insincere?
 You gave up long ago.
 But the tears just start to flow,
 Feel the salt dripping in your mouth.
 Mixing with your blood and drowning,
 Hearing you scream words of fear.
 Walking the halls alone again,
 Hearing words that people shout.
 They are right,
 They are true.

Almost more than twelve people out of one-hundred thousand people commit suicide. That happens when they feel defeated, when they have given up. It is heart breaking to see the amount of people that do give in. This happens on a daily basis, why shouldn't we want to stop it? I feel that the people that let this drive on are the ones afraid of the darkness, afraid of the consequences. So now they stand taller and stronger, but they use it to hurt the ones hiding and curled in their corner. They hurt the ones that have found another way trying to avoid their now decided fate.

You knew if you jumped with a cold hard rope,
 Wrapped around your neck,
 You would stop,
 You would end,
 You would never begin.
 So instead you held a silver heart,
 One sharp and pointed,
 Always ready to start.
 Looking at the silver shining,
 It was your best.
 Always a great friend,
 Always brought the crimson you missed.
 You watched as a river fell,
 And hit your silver heart,
 From an unwanted eye.
 You held it up.
 Waiting for crimson.
 It fell.
 Silver met a beat,
 Ended all the same.
 You were never worth fighting for.
 Now there was no longer a fight.

Now I don't believe that bullying starts on a random note. It's thought out and has a reason; though most are different there are some that are common. Maybe the person who is hurting you is hurt and can't find another way to cope; maybe they just want to test you. They could have problems with family or had a hard time growing up. But does any of that give them a special clearance to hurt? I truly believe not. When save.org can say 1 in 65,000 people age 10 to 14 commit suicides each year is just so wrong, why do they want to be the cause of a death, kids our age are dying because of the people like them.

So why do people just stay on their knees? Who don't they stand up for what they believe in? It's because they are scared, scared of the adults telling them it's not worth fighting for, scared of an increase in the pain. So they have given up. They remain on their knees until someone comes to them wanting to help. We should start the evolution of helping.

Now I know that I am always trying to stop the vicious cycle however I can. But I know I could try harder, maybe I could try to convince some people to stand up, not like before when all it was posters that said nothing. No, I'm talking standing up and telling the adults that they don't understand it has changed. There has been some things that's has changed with the evolution of technology. You're not going to walk into war with a wooden club and some rocks. So I say let the kids take over, let us begin the new war of fighting the bullying and stopping it, let us teach the adults about it. Let us teach a class, Let the bullies, victims, and people that pass by teach you what's going on. Let us provide you with the knowledge of how to change and stop it! "Knowing what's right doesn't mean much unless you do what's right," the great words of Theodor Roosevelt. Now the Adults know what is right but they don't know exactly how to stop it. They know how it worked with sticks and stones, but now that we have phones. Kids know how to be perfect angels around people of authority and higher status. Do you think someone who bullies is going to admit it and say they aren't going to stop? No. They are going to deny it, and fake it till they make it. So next time when someone brings up a problem don't speak to them immediately figure out a way to catch it on tape. They can't lie then, All they can do is accept it and see what fate brings and what the fate should be is some monitoring, don't leave them to continue the horrid things. So let us stand up for once and stop acting like we have no power, for if you smother us we will never break from the cycle of hate.

Alex Neibaur - 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Kimberly Carter

Violence either directly or indirectly affects everyone. Youth violence is unnecessary fighting or assault on random or selected people from ages 10 to 24. Violence is scary, especially youth violence. People feel really scared when they see someone coming at them with a club or another weapon. They get angry, stressed and hurt both physically and mentally, even the attackers feel that way. Then the people who were attacked or bullied attack and bully other kids and so on. There are many types of violence that affect youth, Fighting, shootings, and every other way you can think up.

Everyone's affected by violence, even if they don't realize it. I was going into the fifth grade salta program at a new school. At first it was great, I had a good teacher, and my classmates all seemed really nice. I had lots of friends I was starting to make, I was on student council, when it happened. It started with my classmates, they started harassing me at recess, and teasing me in class. At first I tried to ignore it, but then it got too much to bear. A couple times I got into a shoving match. I was getting very angry and sad. What saved me from becoming a bully myself was my two good friends on student council. Parker and Cadan liked basketball too, just like me. At recess the three of us would find an empty court, and play 21 and one on one games. Eventually, near the end of the year the bullying stopped, because my classmates could see that I wasn't bothered by it anymore.

The leading cause of violence in youth is violence itself. Youth get angry at the people who are attacking them and bullying them and either attack back, or take it out on someone else. On a nationwide survey, 16.6% of youth ages nine to twelve reported that they carried a weapon[Such as a gun, knife, or club.] to school at least once in the 30 days before the survey. These kids are nine to twelve years old! They carried a weapon to school in case a bully came after them. If they had gone ahead with their plan and a bully came after them, those kids would have probably become bullies themselves, and a lot more violent than the bully that was bullying

them. Another big reason for youth violence is a bad environment or abuse. If kids have to harsh parents they can take out their anger and become a bully. Kids need to feel like their loved, if they don't feel like their parents love them or are proud of them, they get angry and sad. The same thing with kids who have parents that aren't harsh enough. The kids who have parents like that have no boundaries to what they can and can't do. The kids are the ones who are in charge of themselves and that shouldn't happen. The kids feel like that their parents don't care what happens to you and thus, the same result. Kids need to feel like their loved or else they will become bullies, or that one bully who has been bullying them for a while will finally achieve his goal.

Preventing violence should be pretty easy, except kids want to look cool and don't want to help kids out. Stopping violence is as simple as being a friend. It's what Parker and Cadan did and they saved me from being a bully. Even the bullies need a friend. If everyone befriends a victim or a bully, we can stop that deadly chain reaction that has been affecting thousands of people. To prevent youth violence I can be a friend to kids who aren't popular or get picked on. I can also befriend the bullies in my school, if they have a friend they might stop bullying. As a community we could set up a bully prevention day where people meet at a park and they play games and meet new people. Our country has already taken steps toward preventing violence. October is bully prevention month which I think helps a lot.

Youth violence is unnecessary fighting, bullying or assault on people ages 10-24 on either random or selected people. Violence affects us in many ways. We see it on the media. We could even be the ones getting assaulted or bullied. We see it in our communities and schools. Schools feel a lot un-safer when violence is a problem, same thing with cities and towns. If the world didn't have violence at all everyone would feel a lot safer and be relieved. You wouldn't have to be scared about walking alone at night. If violence was gone every place you could think of would be a lot safer. I can help reduce violence by being friend to people who are either being bullied or are bullying. Violence is bad news, and it's our job to stop it.

Camden Snow – 8th Grade
Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Elise Shepherd

Violence in the World Today

Bill Cosby once stated, "The main goal of the future is to stop violence. The world is addicted to it." Violence refers to aggressive acts upon another or one's self that can result in injury or, in worse cases, death. Violence comes in many different forms: verbal, physical, or even just a simple text message. Any young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness of violence. Violence plays a huge part in our society today. It's hardly ever a good thing, and it's steadily becoming one of the leading causes of injuries and deaths among children and adults all over the world.

Almost exactly a year ago, on December 14, 2012, a mass murder took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. A twenty year old man by the name of Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty innocent children and six faculty & staff members before taking his own life. When I heard about this event it really opened my eyes to all the violence going on in our world today, especially amongst young people. It's really quite scary to think about at times. Although Sandy Hook and other instances of youth violence in schools haven't personally affected me from a physical perspective, it has definitely affected me emotionally. It has changed the way I look at others and how I treat them. I have never been in a fight nor have I been what I consider to be a victim of bullying. I have had a rumor or two spread about me, but overall I've been very blessed. This does not mean violence doesn't happen at our school - it does. I've seen kids be bullied and picked on, rumors spread about them, or even have something rude text to them. I usually try to stay away from these kinds of things, but sometimes I regret not getting involved.

People aren't born violent. But there are many different factors experts believe that cause people and groups to become violent and why youth violence has become so prevalent. Some believe that the current generation of youth are exposed to violence more than ever before through movies, television, video games, Internet and other forms of mass media. This repeated exposure to violence has desensitized the youth of today and thus committing acts of violence have become more generally accepted. Another factor experts believe is a cause in increased youth violence is the growing lack of guidance. Without an adult or positive role model, young people have a hard time learning and distinguishing what is acceptable an unacceptable forms of behavior. Without strong role models and guidance youth also struggle to learn how to resolve conflict peacefully. The biggest factor in my opinion is a positive home environment. People learn what they live. If home is a frightening, violent, abusive, neglectful environment, which is likely how a person will act when they are outside of their home.

There are many ways I can help prevent violence around me. The biggest way would be to just be nice to people. Treat others with respect and as an equal, especially if their having a hard time with a type of bullying. Another good way is to build up my self-esteem. If you have confidence in yourself you are a lot less vulnerable to becoming a victim of violence. Another thing I can do is be a good role model to others and show them how kindness and patience is always more endearing than force.

In summary, violence is a terrible epidemic which is becoming ever more present among the youth of today. Instances of violence can be seen almost daily on the news and in various forms of media that confront all of us. Without stronger controls on media violence and better emphasis on positive role models this epidemic will continue to grow. As for myself, I never want another Sandy Hook or Columbine to happen, especially at my school. To do my part I have decided to make an extra effort to not only avoid being a part of violence against others, but also take stance with my friends and other that violence is not acceptable – ever.

Lauren Wilson - 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Kimberly Carter

“Do the Write Thing”
And Say “No” To Youth Violence

Violence. That is a word we hear, but never really think that it affects our lives as much as it does. The definition of violence in the Webster’s Dictionary is,

1. behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

Yes, that is what violence technically means. But we rarely witness “Physical force intended to kill,” on a day to day basis. So, it doesn’t really directly affect our lives. But indirectly, it does on a regular schedule. Whether it’s in a movie, in a book, or in the media and social media today’s children revolve their lives around. Kids may not witness it in person, but they hear the stories and watch the movies. In the movies, violence seems like a way to vent anger, as long as it’s not too harsh. But in reality, the actors are just performing. The effects aren’t true, and often movies and media play it down, make it seem not as bad as it really would be. Youth violence is everywhere. I have experienced it, and I know how mentally overwhelming it can be, even if the victims look fine.

I had just began first grade, and was excited to start in my new class. I noticed a lonely girl on that first day, and saw she wasn’t doing the same work as the rest of us. She was learning her alphabet. *She looks normal, I guess*, I thought as I studied her. But she wasn’t. She had a struggling mental disorder that doesn’t affect many people. But she still always managed to keep her head up, and a smile on her face. I envied her for that. We talked more and more, and soon

we became best friends. Everyone viewed her differently, but I always looked at her the same way I looked at everyone else. Came third grade, she began to get bullied. First it was verbally, then physically. Children would push her off the swings, we would play on the slide. They'd kick her down the slide, we would play on the bars. She would get forced off that and the cycle would continue. We found ourselves inside for recess a lot. I talked with my parents and decided what to do. We stood up to the bullies, giving my friend confidence and myself relief. Those kids never hurt her again. I remember, parent teacher conferences rolled around, and I met my friend's mother. She started crying, saying how much of an impact I made on her life. It made me wonder how such a little act of friendship could change numerous peoples' lives. I pledged then never to be a bully or stand in the shadows. If I could change someone's life by just doing that, imagine what we could accomplish if we all worked together.

I believe that many factors contribute to youth violence. Many children get abused or depressed in their homes and school lives and that causes a lot of it. That leads to drugs for relief. Drugs change the way you think, they change the way you act, and that causes violence right there. That causes peer pressure, for others to get involved. Peer pressure can lead to violence, and depression, to start the cycle again. It's an on-going cycle that continues for years, lifetimes, or even throughout generations. Diversity also plays the role of contributing to youth violence. Often times, if you are different, you will get bullied and physically harmed. Racial intolerance gives something that people can fight against. Thoughts and opinions give another way for you to be different, therefore, many "different" kids find themselves alone and bullied. Also, media and social media show adolescents that maybe it's okay to behave in violent ways. Media and social media give a way to get angry with a person. Maybe rumors start online and other people get mad.

They could confront that person in school or in another way and fight them. One of my friends learned the hard way that social media can cause many problems. Many things cause youth violence. It may seem like there is nothing we can do to stop it. But there is.

We can stop violence once and for all. It may be as simple as making friends with someone who doesn't have any, or sitting with someone alone at lunch. It can enlighten someone's day greatly to have a friend, and really make them stop thinking violent thoughts. Not all of stopping youth violence will be that easy though. It might even include talking to the violent bullies, and being in a situation that may be very scary. But it's very important to work things out with the bully. If you talk to fix the problem, then the bully will feel less of an urge to vent out their anger with violence. Our community can provide more ways to come together, be united as one. Our school can be friendlier, and every teacher and staff member can be open to talking and helping with students' problems. I can personally prevent violence by being kind to all and try to have a smile on my face. I can keep my head up and provide a safe person to talk to if anyone has any problems they need to talk about.

Violence, is something that affects us all directly or indirectly. It ruins lives, families, and even cities sometimes. The world could be an amazing place if we all could eliminate youth violence. Everyone would be happy, and no kids would feel threatened and endangered. We could celebrate life. Violence free is danger free. That's what we could be.

Kaylee Yeschick - 8th Grade
South Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Dianne Crabtree

Do The Write Thing

LOSER! FREAK! GEEK! MORON! These words are often used by bullies who think that others are weird or don't fit in with them. Thousands of people in the world are bullied every day. Sometimes people are bullied in front of a large crowd. As they are getting bullied, the people in the crowd can have many different reactions. Some of those reactions include looking around to see other people's reactions, acting worried or scared, or others may cheer the bullying on. In the end, nobody offers any help or goes to get someone to help stop the bully. Before you know it, the bully has won and the victim is in pain with tears running down their face. This form of youth violence has become common in the United States.

There are many different causes of youth violence. One cause is when the bully is having a hard time in their own life. They may have lost a loved one, they have been bullied by someone else, their parents could have been going through a divorce, or they could have had a bad hair day. Another cause of youth violence could be the bullies are simply bored and looking for entertainment in the wrong way. Thirdly, youth violence can be caused by loneliness. When people are lonely, they do whatever it takes to get attention. They are so desperate to find people to like them; they don't stop to think about who they are hurting in the process.

I've been a victim of youth violence in the form of bullying before and it was not fun. I have been falsely accused of stealing by someone who felt that they needed more attention. Over several months I was picked on,

called names, and not allowed to sit by anybody on the bus to or from school. On multiple occasions, I have been threatened with violence where people said they would hurt me when I did nothing wrong. In sixth grade, some kids realized that I got good grades and assumed that I must be a cheater, because they were convinced that I was stupid. Many times that I've had people pretend that I'm not even there even when I'm talking to them. Before I got braces, I was made fun of regularly because of how my teeth looked. I've had many times where people would say that they are having a party, but that I wasn't invited.

These incidences of bullying have affected me in several ways. I find it very difficult to trust people. I have many acquaintances, but very few true friends. I tend to be an insecure person that struggles with my self-esteem. It got so bad that I tried to draw as little attention to myself as possible. Lately I've forced myself to be more expressive with my clothes, in an attempt to overcome these feelings, but it is a struggle. I have gotten a perfect 4.0 every quarter at middle school, but until this quarter I kept it a secret, because I didn't want to be falsely accused of cheating again.

There are several things my community and I can do to help prevent youth violence and other forms of bullying. One thing we can do is to make sure that everybody feels included and doesn't feel left out whenever possible. Also when we see people being bullied, we should not ignore it. Report the problem right away and speak up. Sometimes even just one person speaking up is enough to stop the behavior and maybe even

enough to get others to speak up too. Some schools and communities even have support groups where people can turn to others that are experiencing similar problems and not feel alone anymore.

In conclusion, youth violence and other forms of bullying are serious and common problems almost everywhere. When bullying isn't addressed early on, it will only continue to get worse. Bullying violence leaves scars in the victims that will never go away. If you have been bullied before or you know someone who has been, then you know how serious the short and long term consequences can be. We need to stand up and prevent youth violence and any other kind of bullying whenever possible to help make the world a better place for all of us. Help stop the bullying, NOW!!

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Honorable Mention

Elijah Arellano

**8th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda L. Lujan**

Jessica Bliss

**8th Grade, Delta Middle School
Teacher, Colleen Atkinson**

Hayden Brown

**8th Grade, South Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Jessica Larsen**

Rachel Burbidge

**8th Grade, Desert Hills Middle School
Teacher, Jennifer Lyman**

Avery Bethers

**8th Grade, Juab Junior High
Teacher, Angela Hall**

Ki McAllister

**7th Grade, Juab Junior High
Teacher, Angela Hall**

Brett Roundy

**8th Grade, Delta Middle School
Teacher, Colleen Atkinson**

Matthias Tigner

**8th Grade, Kanab Middle School
Teacher, Jeanine Johnson**

Allyson Timpson

**7th Grade, West Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Stacey Sawyer**

Jacki Sanudo

**8th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda L. Lujan**

Kaden Ward

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kim Irvine**

Keisha Williams

**8th Grade, Kanab Middle School
Teacher, Jeanine Johnson**

Elijah Arellano - 8th Grade
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda L. Lujan

Changing the World

Youth violence can affect many people in many ways. Everyone bullies in one way or another, but not everyone notices it. There are three types of youth violence/bullying. Verbal bullying is mostly people spreading rumors about others that aren't even close to the truth. Physical bullying is the least common to happen in my opinion, and then there is cyber bullying, which I think is the worst.

Cyber bullying is the worst type of bullying that we have. This is so because everyone has cell phones, Facebook, twitter, and other social media. Cyber bullying can really hurt others just as any other type of bullying can. Teenagers mostly do cyber bullying but adults can also do it. Many people who study bullying think that TV causes teens and others to learn most of the hurtful words that we use against each other. Cyber bullying can be just as hurtful as physically hurting someone. Texting, e-mailing or even Facebook makes it a lot easier to harass someone or bully him or her then saying it face to face. I know that this entire social media is changing the way that we live our lives, but it should not change the way that you treat a person.

Verbal and physical bullying also falls under that mean, unfriendly way of talking to others. Verbal bullying happens mostly at school than anywhere else.” In school kids who said that, they were frequently bullied that 30 percent of them reported depression, and 11 percent reported serious suicide thoughts and suicide attempts. For those who did the bullying 19 percent were experiencing depression and about 8 percent reported suicidal thoughts or attempts. Among those who said they were never bullied 7 percent of them reported depression, and 3 percent suicidal thought or attempts. The studies found about 9 percent of high school students said they were frequently bullied, and 13 percent said they frequently bullied others. These rates

were consistent with other studies. "(Researchers said.) Many hurtful things that people say when verbal bullying is based on their appearance, how they look, how they dress. Now a day's people are all about their swag. If you don't wear, specific brands of clothes people think of you as an outcast. They tend to push you away from their group and call you nasty and hurtful words that they think is funny. This is verbal bullying; most people do not even know that they are doing it. It is just a natural thing to say the things that they say because they say it so many times and no one stands up to them or tells them that what they say and do is wrong. Therefor they just keep on going and going and going. Eventually the person they bully just cannot take it anymore. Either they react in physical ways trying to fight that one individual or even worse, they react by hurting themselves such as trying to commit suicide. Same with physical bullying it hurts kids but not as much as verbal bullying or cyber bullying would. Overall just respect others and in return, you will be respected also.

I think that everyone is afraid of something. This fear should not be that a child does not want to go to school because their scared that once they get there they are just going to be bullied once more. More people need to recognize youth violence and it is a strong part of our society today. Gangs are a strong sign of youth violence. Whenever you see a group of gang members together, it usually does not mean good. Gangs bring us weapons such as guns, and knives. They also bring dugs, weed, and alcohol. We do not need all that in this world. Kids think that once you are in a gang that you have more power that you have found true friends, that is not at all what it represents. The word "gangs" represents bad, represents hate in everyone but their own. Our generation is messed up, with all the youth violence, bullying, etc. If we could get rid of violence then honestly, I think we would live in a perfect society, sadly, nothing is perfect. I wish that we could live in a utopia where everything is just perfect. No bullying, youth violence,

poverty, rich, everyone is equal. Youth violence can start when your just a teen and stay with you into your adult hood. The best thing to do when you see any of these things happening is to simply slide in and tell them to stop.

In conclusion, we need to all stand up to youth violence. Speak up when we hear or see it happening. We need to stop bullies all together. Most importantly stop yourself from bullying. Don't you think that helping out somebody will just make you feel like a better person and will always react to youth violence and bullying? Besides, "we can't change the world unless we change ourselves." (Notorious B.I.G.)

Jessica Bliss - 8th Grade
Delta Middle School - Teacher, Colleen Atkinson

Cyber-bullying

Bullying is no longer something that only happens on the play ground or after school. Its gotten high tech. Its found its way on social network websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Ask.fm, and other websites where people can have a dialogue with others. Part of the problem is that in this cyber realm, people will often say things they wouldn't typically say, especially on websites where they are not identified, like Ask.fm.

There are a few things that make cyber bullying particularly bad. One is that slanderous rumors meant to torment can reach a larger audience than traditional bullying usually does. Another thing is that cyber bullying, unlike traditional bullying, doesn't just go away at the end of the school day. Once you get home and get onto the web, it can continue. The internet is just one more way a bully can access their victim. An added problem with the internet is that it is possible, on some websites where you don't have to reveal your name, that the victim may not know who the person is that is bullying them.

Cyber bullying has some very damaging effects on its victims. When some people get bullied enough, it can cause their personality to change. An outgoing person can become withdrawn. Grades can suffer. Victims often become depressed and fearful. Some people even consider homeschooling to escape, but there isn't an escape once they enter the cyber world. A 16-year-old girl from Florida said that she was told to kill herself, that no one liked her at school, that everyone would be happier if she was dead, and that her boyfriend deserved someone better. The bullying went on every day. When she was asked why she didn't just delete her social media profiles, she said it should be those who harass her who are punished and removed from sites. "It's not my fault that other people don't know how to treat other people and I don't think I should have to be the one who gives it up," she said. She was able to handle it, but not everyone can. Another 12-year-old girl from Florida got bullied so much that she jumped from a platform and killed herself because she couldn't handle it. She had been bullied for more than a year by a group of older students.

There are various ways to deal with cyber bullying. Individuals can change accounts or avoid social media where this problem is occurring.

Internet sites can hire safety managers for their websites. They can encourage their users to report inappropriate things to the website. Classes could even be taught in school or in the community about internet etiquette. The classes could teach the consequences of cyber bullying and that cyber bullying can be prosecutable. Children need to be taught to report any problems they run into on the internet. Parents and school officials should be taught to report problems to police where children are being threatened. A good example of what adults can do to help is a high school coach who suspended his whole entire football team for bad behavior in cyber space. They had to earn their way back onto the team, and most of them did. If adults will do all they can to be aware of the problem and do something about it, it will help this problem greatly.

This growing problem is difficult to measure since its up to victims to report it. Unfortunately kids have been known to commit suicide as a result of cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is a new twist on an old problem. People need to be aware of it, and understand the problems it creates so they can fight against it.

Hayden Brown - 8th Grade
South Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Jessica Larsen

In America today, violence and bullying are common problems among the nation's youth. Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior where one person, the perpetrator, has power over another, the victim. Bullying includes actions like making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone verbally or physically, or excluding someone. Bullying is a growing problem among young people today because of the growing use of electronics like email, texting, and social media. Although it's a growing problem, there are things we can do to prevent bullying.

Personally, I have not witnessed or been a perpetrator or victim of bullying or violence. But last month, I saw a story on the news about two girls in Florida, 12 and 14 years old, who were actually arrested because they bullied another girl so badly she committed suicide. These girls are about my age and the story has affected me. The fourteen year old girl started seeing the victim's ex-boyfriend and then the bullying got bad. The victim was kicked out of their group of friends and the 14 year old perpetrator sent terrible text messages, telling the girl she should kill herself. When the victim did kill herself, the two other girls were arrested. Even after the arrest, the 14 year old tweeted that she didn't care that the victim had killed herself. The victim's mother said nobody stood up for her daughter and she didn't know how bad the bullying had become. The victim's mom wants everyone to know what happened to her daughter so students can know the consequences of bullying.

When I heard and thought about this story, it made me really mad. How can people be so cruel? I realize how it could happen so easily. No adults knew what was going on. Nobody at the school knew and the victim's mother didn't know until it was too late to do anything about it. If I had known these girls, I'd like to think I would stand by the victim and defend her, but I've never been in that situation so I don't know for sure what I would do. I do think if I knew something like that was going on, I would tell a teacher or somebody at school.

There are many causes of bullying and youth violence. Sometimes bullies are probably jealous and just want to be popular. This was maybe the case in Florida among the three girls. Sometimes bullies probably act out because of peer pressure. Social media, email, and texting have made it easier to bully others and harder for adults to always see bullying so they can stop it. Some students might even learn it at home because they might be bullied by a sibling and nobody stops it.

Although bullying and youth violence will probably never go away entirely, there are things that can be done to decrease it. We should keep talking about it in schools and have assemblies and conversations with our teachers about it. If we are always talking about it, we will know who to talk to. Also, we should never just be bystanders when we see it happening. Students should learn to say something and stand up for one another. When we see messages on Facebook that are mean towards somebody we should say something like "that's not cool." If it gets bad enough, we need to tell a parent, or a teacher, or somebody who

can help. I wonder how many bystanders there are in the middle school in Florida who now have to live with knowing they did nothing to prevent the girl's suicide.

In conclusion, bullying is a growing problem that must be stopped. And, it's not all out in the open, in hallways and playgrounds. Cyberbullying is a new and growing problem. But we can decrease bullying in our schools if we continue to talk about it, so we will recognize it when it happens. We can learn to discourage it from happening, become friends with victims, and learn who to talk to when we need it. Bullying might be hard to stop, but it can be decreased.

Rachel Burbidge - 8th Grade
Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Jennifer Lyman

Is bullying a problem? It is estimated that 160,000 kids stay home every day due to fear of being bullied. Bullying is a major problem in schools today. One in every seven kids today are bullied or the bully in kindergarten through 12th grade. Some people think that bullying is not as serious as violence. Violence is not just physical it is verbal and emotional. Kids are not just bullied at school they can also be bullied in their own home by those people. Kids today can hide behind a computer screen and think they say what they want and think that it is okay, but that can be bullying. Bullying can cause many problems. It can cause depression, anxiety, and a feeling that you are not good enough. People who are bullied are two to nine times more likely to think about committing suicide than people who are not. Bullying is awful and no one should experience it. Even people who seem happy and successful can be bullied. As Demi Lovato once said, "People say sticks and stones may break your bones, but names can never hurt you, but that's not true. Words can hurt. They hurt me. Things were said to me that I still haven't forgotten."

I was bullied just last year. I was called terrible names and I felt worthless. I have never been physically bullied, but I have been verbally. I tried everything to avoid that person; it made my life very hard. Going through that experience has made me very self-conscious. I was always worried about what people thought about me or said. I have come to realize that I should not care what people say, but it does not mean that words still don't hurt. They hurt more than being beaten up because those scars heal; the ones said never do.

There are many causes of bullying. Believe it or not, people are often bullied because of the things they like. It could be because of the band you like or the clothes you wear. It is not only that. Kids are bullied because bullies pick the weakest looking people and target them. It could be because of the way you talk or the people you hang out with. Why do bullies do it at all? I think bullies bully because they are insecure about themselves.

Bullying can't be stopped altogether, but it can be prevented in certain circumstances. If you stand up for the people who are bullied, you can help them or maybe even stop it. Sometimes you can't stop it, but whether you realize it or not, you are helping them. If you are their friend, a person they can talk to or even a shoulder to cry on, you can make their life easier. People who are bullied just want a friend. It is up to you to be that friend. You may not think you are a bully, but if you have ever said anything hurtful, picked on someone, or targeted a person you are. If you are being a bully think before you act; it is all up to you to stop it.

Bullying is seen everywhere and has been on the earth for thousands of years. Some people say they have never been bullied or been

the bully, but most of them are lying. Probably everyone one at one point or another has been bullied or been the bully. The world we live in is a scary and hard place, being bullied just makes it worse. But, we shouldn't care what other people think they are just trying to bring you down. As one of Taylor Swift's songs say, "Don't you worry your pretty little mind; people throw rocks at things that shine."

Avery Bethers - 8th Grade
Juab Junior High - Teacher, Angela Hall

The Violence Virus

Violence is a quick spreading virus sweeping the nation. This contagious illness spreads from parents to children, media, or from bullying. We all know someone who has been affected by this or who still carries it. We know that violence is physical, but we don't pay enough attention to the emotional part of bullying.

When we think of violence we think of all physical, but it can be emotional too. When I lost all of my friends in sixth grade I didn't think of it as a form of bullying or violence. It seems sometimes, that something is not as big a deal, as it is to someone else. One word can mean nothing to one person and the whole world to another. I hadn't had many close friends since the third grade and I felt like I had made some real ones this time. I was always a little nervous for middle school and so I asked my friends if they would always be there for me, so we could still be friends in junior high. They said that we would always stick together and I believed them. I went to school on an ordinary day. I went to meet up with them and to talk with them. That day they didn't really want to talk with me and they told me they were going to talk with some other friends. It went on for a while and one day the last friend I had left, told me they were gossiping about me. They told her that I was rude and I talked too much, I was annoying in their eyes and I felt like they described me to be. I felt that I was rude and annoying I felt bad about myself. I started getting sick and having to stay home because I didn't want to go to school. When I went to school they would play a game that they would follow me and when I turned around they would hide.

It made me feel alone and worthless and I hated it. When I told them to stop they would say that it was just a game, and I was just making a big deal about it so I didn't tell them to stop. I never told the teacher because if I did they would say that I was a brat, and I was making a big deal out of nothing and I didn't want that, so I kept my mouth shut. When I went home I could only imagine bad things that they would say to me if I told anyone and it made me miserable. I felt like I had to have someone to talk to

or something to listen to because I was scared all the time even my own thoughts. I always wanted to be with my parents and I always went to bed at 5:00 because I was so scared. I felt worthless and that I was too annoying for anyone to be friends with. I felt alone and scared. I found new friends after a while and I am still scared that I am too annoying. I want my old friends to know that it was a huge impact on my life and that no one deserves to be depressed by what anyone says.

The causes of this kind of violence is jealousy, retaliation, and to make themselves look better. Some people could have a bad life at home, be bullied themselves, or be jealous of the bullied person in any way. If a child is bullied at home by their parents they could feel that is the right way to take out their anger. They then take out all of their hurt on a student or child at school or anywhere. We need to stop this from happening.

What can I do about youth violence? I can be kind, helpful, and proactive. I can be kind to those who suffer from youth violence and to those who have trouble controlling their emotions. I can be helpful by being a friend to the abused kids and not judge them. I can help the kids who feel defeated like I did after verbal violence. And I can be proactive and not sit and watch youth violence happen around me. These are the steps we can take to stop the violence virus.

We understand that there is violence around us, and it is not just physical. Verbal and emotional violence can hurt just as deeply as a wound. One word can mean nothing to you and the world to another person. Help stop the illness spreading through the nation. Help kill violence.

Ki McAllister - 7th Grade
Juab Junior High - Teacher, Angela Hall

The Virtual World of Violence

Running for my life across the 2D platform I come to a halt at the edge preparing to terminate my brother. "Bam bam bam." The virtual avatar fell to his death except it was not my brother, It was me. In a mad rage I yelled and threw my remote at my brother. Instantly my mom heard, the Wii was off and I was in my room. That simple act of violence in the game, led to another greater act of violence against my brother. As you can see violence in media can greatly influence violence out of the movie/game.

Media violence has caused great distress in my life. It has caused my anger, after playing, to be on the edge for the rest of the day. Because of the adrenaline it gives, it is addicting and hard to stop. One of the major effects on my life is it has caused my brother to be more tense by me if he is by me at all. Because i don't like the effects of the media violence I have been off the electronics for a couple of months. I see how greatly it had affected me. Those are only a few ways it has affected me.

Media causes many things out side of my home too. Some people model their life after the violent people in video games and movies. This can make the people rude. Maybe even do things that the characters do. According to " The New York Times," Shooting in the Dark, A study at Iowa State University showed the aggression of undergraduates after playing a violent video game. They were allowed to make their peers eat hot sauce. The ones that played the video game made the others eat more hot sauce. Another thing the article stated is that the people that play the games is they know it, "stirs their blood." Luckily These thing can be avoided.

There are many ways to prevent violence caused by the media. One of the best ways to prevent it is to avoid it all together. If you find yourself with unsettled nerves, make a deep breath, count to ten, and keep yourself under control. When an other person has been affected by this type of violence, don't do anything to provoke them. Try to shorten the amount of time you and others have to witness or play the violent games and movies. Stay away from it as much as you can.

Violence in all forms should be avoided. Avoiding media violence is just as much, if not more, important to avoid because it leads to other forms of violence. Plus it is mainly all garbage. It is because of the things it causes. It has led to many disasters. The last three major massacres had 1 thing in common, they all played violent games. Media violence is a major form of violence. Help the world be a better place. Stop media violence.

Brett Roundy - 8th Grade
Delta Middle School - Teacher, Colleen Atkinson

Absent Role of a Father

It sucks when your friends are bragging. "I got to do this with my dad."

"Well so my dad got me this" And you're standing there thinking to yourself, I'd give anything to just have a dad. My dad left me and my family when I was two, and I haven't seen him since. One of my very close friends lives with out a father.

President Obama once wrote in an article for Parade Magazine, 'I came to understand the hole a man leaves when he abandons his responsibility to his children, is one no government can fill. We can do everything possible to provide good jobs and good schools and safe streets for our kids, but it will never be enough to fully make up the difference.

One of the major disadvantages a single parent household comes to is economically. There income is on average less than that of the income of that of married couples. Absent father children are four times more likely to live below the poverty line than kids with to parents.

The absence of a father means a lot higher chance of juvenile delinquencies, incarceration, and teen pregnancy, along with lower grades and much higher high-school dropout rates. They are also more likely to abuse drugs, more likely to be obese, and develop behavioral problems. The most unnerving statistic, father absent teens constitute a staggering 63 percent of all teen suicides.

The result of this experiment are that children need a father. Despite this undeniable reality, a growing number of people insist that fatherhood and it's implicated masculinity are archaic notions that should be discarded. Since the beginning of time fathers have been the protectors and providers of the family, but to many, the very concept of a masculine protector seems sexist. All children deserve a provider and protector, and fathers are uniquely suited for the job. No other occupation that a man could have is a greater opportunity.

A great deal of success as a father comes from just being there. Some psychologists refer to the importance of quality time "but it is really sincere day to day quantity time that children need. A kids confidence increases just by knowing a father is available.

With that said. I pledge that form the moment I have kids I will be there for them till the day that I die. So that they will never feel the pain that I have felt. I hope that some day that every kid will have a father to be there for them.

Matthias Tigner - 8th Grade
Kanab Middle School - Teacher, Jeanine Johnson

Do The Write Thing

There are many types of violence, like domestic violence, bullying, and abuse. The most common type of violence in schools everywhere, and in our school community here, is bullying. Children and teens are bullied every day, and its not only happening in our community. People are bullied all over the world, whether its at school on the playground or at home. Kids tell their teachers, but sometimes they commit no effort in stopping the bullying. I believe that just like teachers and parents, an individual, like myself, can reduce youth violence in a community.

For instance, I feel that youth violence can and does often affect the daily lives of others, including my own. Whenever I see violence or bullying in our community, it makes me wonder about what this world is coming too. Furthermore, it makes me wonder how and why kids enjoy hectoring others. When I see this happening to those around me, I become truly depressed and utterly curious to why such a thing happens. The sight of this horrific action also causes me to feel hurt inside, and makes me want to reach out for those who are bullied. Bullying affects my life in many ways, just like others in different communities. So stand up and make a change!

In the same way as children around the world, I too am often confronted with youth violence. I usually see tons of bullying in our community. I see bullying everywhere, whether at the park or along the streets. Even just horsing around with friends, like calling each other names, is very much accumulated with bullying. Just like in middle school, there are many bullies in elementary school. I once was in elementary school, and kids were being bullies if they knew it or not. For example, like not letting someone play with you at recess

or sit by you at lunch. I see this happen frequently in most grade levels. I see and are confronted with bullying in other homes, as well as mine own. There is fighting and arguing between my relatives and siblings, even with parents. Other's are confronted with violence, not just myself, and we can help change that in our communities.

In addition, in our community, mostly like others, there are many causes of youth violence and bullying. Some of which might be problems at home or being just plain out mean. Or maybe you're having a bad day, or got a really bad test score. It might be that this person was mean to you in the past, so you want revenge. There are so many that may be the cause to youth violence and bullying. I feel that the two causes of youth violence and bullying in our community are family problems and wanting to get revenge on people. There are definitely further causes to bullying in our community, but I feel these are the two main causes.

Therefore, I believe with all of this knowledge and information, other individuals, like myself, can reduce youth violence in our own communities. That is, if you are willing to stick up for others to reduce this violence. We could help council with teachers at school and or outside of school. We could ask the parents of the bullies, if they need any help at all. We can ask why they bully, and try to get them to stop. Or we can just simply be a friend for those who bully other kids because they don't have any friends. All in all, being brave and wanting to help those who are the victims of bullying and violence, is what will eventually reduce if not stop youth violence in our community.

Allyson Timpson - 7th Grade
West Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Stacey Sawyer

ONE WORD

One word. That's all it takes to start the chain.

I was in third grade. I had always been happy; I didn't have a reason not to. Until that one day where my ordinary life, was flipped around.

The recess bell had just rung. I quickly put away my spelling, grabbed my current book, and headed out the door. I walked to the back of the grass field to my favorite spot in that school, the big oak tree. Everything was normal, the way I liked it. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw two boys, walking towards me. I didn't think much about it, sticking my nose further into the novel. I didn't look up until I saw the two boys standing in front of me. They looked at me with their icy glare, while one of the boys spoke. "Loser." They turned, and walked away.

I didn't think much about it. "Who cares," I told myself. "They are just boys." Nothing happened for a while. It was about two weeks later when they came up again. "Loser," then walked away. It happened three times that week. It started to become a part of my daily routine. One day, it was a little different.

I was reading at the oak tree, of course. The two boys came up. Just as I was expecting the word they always said, they through me a curveball. "Put the book down and go for a run, fatty," one of the boys said then they ran off. Tears pricked my eyes as the recess bell rang, calling for all the kids. I stood up, grabbed my book, and slowly walked back to class.

Every day, the insults got worse. Fat, stupid, dumb, annoying, worthless. Each day, my heart would rip in half more. It had gotten so bad that I started to stay inside for recess. My friends worried about me. Their fun and bubbly friend had been replaced with a quiet and broken one.

One day, my friend walked by the two boys. They were talking about me. As my friend was listening, she heard about how the boys were planning on slapping me within a few days. The letters in “slap” jumbled in the air and my friend heard that they were planning to “shoot” me.

When my friend told me this, I had a breakdown outside. They wanted me dead. I was going to be killed. I finally decided to involve the teachers. In retrospect, I’m not sure why I didn’t involve them earlier. It would have saved a lot of grief. Anyway, my teacher pulled me, the boys, and my friend that told me out of class. My teacher questioned us about what was happening. My friend spoke, talking about their plans to shoot me. The two boys instantly denied the fact and told how they were planning to slap me. We talked about the situation for a bit longer, and then went back to our class. I was never bullied by them again.

Even though they never bullied me, that didn’t mean I wasn’t bullied again. I was bullied a lot, including by my own self, but those two boys started it with that one word.

Kids everywhere are bullied every day. It might be physical or verbal. By friends or people they don’t even know. Everyone can help prevent it though. Stand up for the victim. Stop being the bystander and help. It’s so simple, yet apparently so hard. You can do it.

Some causes of bullying are the bully isn’t confident in themselves, they see you as a threat, or they don’t like what you’re doing. One more is that they were bullied themselves. Effects of bullying are that everyone all around feels horrible. We can prevent bullying though. Do your part. Don’t bully, stand up for others, and be a good friend. With everyone taking these steps, youth violence won’t exist.

One word. That’s all it takes to start the chain.

“Be careful how you judge other people, you don’t sum up a man’s life in one moment.” – Al Pacino

Jacki Sanudo - 8th Grade
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda L. Lujan

Accepting the Truth

Today, I accept the truth.
There is nothing but differences in our youth.
Things might never be the same.
Although I believe, that it's our job to create a change.
Perhaps it's just a fantasy.
A fantasy that is fading slowly.

Do you think you're cool hurting others?
Ha, I'm so disappointed in you. Just like our mother.
Imagine how your life would be, far away from all this violence?
I don't know who you're trying to be
But you'd have the key to be free
So stop with all your unwanted nonsense silence.

Quit fronting, we all know you're no thug.
Just quit complaining and admit you want a hug.
All these drugs is going to keep haunting you.
Why can't you just fall onto reality and realize that you have no sense to argue?
Try to get away from all this misery.
Please! Trust me.
You'll no longer say "trouble follows me."

I'm going to lay back and pray that you get that piece of mind of me.
You think you're right but you're wrong, you're just too blind to see.
So please be strong.
Seriously, why can't you just admit that you're wrong?
All you gotta do is say "I quit."
And we, your family, will deeply appreciate it.

This will be the only time where it's acceptable to be a quitter.
Do you want me to be any clearer?
Where's the old you?
It's just as if you got stuck in the wrong road with the wrong shoe.
I believe things happen for a reason.
So reflect on your decisions, before life gives you a beaten.

Today, I accept the truth.
There is nothing but differences in our youth.
Is it really that hard to stay on track?
It's as if you're going five step forward and ten steps back.
You keep running away from those who love you most.
But how can you create a distance... when it's supposed to be close?

Kaden Ward - 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kim Irvine

Make a Change

Night had fallen at last as we take a walk through the past,
Memories stay which stuck in replay I see no more.
The lights flick fast as there gone into the past.
We hear no more yet the drops of blood from every last breath.
The pain yells out help! yet no one hears,
The tears fade and wash away as he exclaims, please stay.

No feeling to feel or tears to grieve I feel your pain they all say,
They feel none of how I feel nor how the words hit the ground weather they hit hard or gentle.
As they say farewell the words burry deep,
The flowers red and blue yet none were true as the pain hits again.
That plastic smile saying it's okay yet your heart saying its not.

The dirt piles up with your last good byes as your voice shakes in gloom,
I may not see whom again but they stay within your reach.
No last words with hugs and kisses I feel nothing yet I feel the pain.
The bruises up on his face they leave bad memories for them to blame.

The tears cry out in pain that stains in red,
The bumps and busies leave no fond memories.
The love is strong which is hard to say yet we know what is wrong is going on,
Held to the ground with cry's all around it hits as hard as stone.
Once again he strikes once more,
The stain of pain cannot be bleached like the scars of your past.

The days go slow with no one to show,
He hits the ground as he rebounds the shot it hits so hard I hear no more.
The pain comes again saying I will I will yet I don't,
I don't.

The words hit again as I take the walk of the forbidden path,
They hit the same as the tears collide like fire meets gas.
I hear no more yet see the pain with no one to blame but myself.
I fall again with twitch in my dream I hit the stone as cold as artic.
Love is near,
Love is close,
Yet I feel none from coast to coast.

The pain may fade off one day but not any time soon,
Not from summer to fall nor winter to bloom I still hear them with the words of the gentle wind.

There's lots of a stories, but none like mine. The words all hit the same but each is very different. "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on." — Robert Frost. The Quote that has helped me through this incident was this one by Robert Frost. Life goes on don't lets it slow you down or bring you down. We are here for a reason, we all learn and feel but the ones who move on are the ones changing the word. The word may spin in only one direction yet it never stops. It never stops because the ones who move on, keep it spinning. This event that happened was about my twin brother who had been killed by my step dad from abuse. I had stood there day after day and done nothing if I could put my life in replay I would but you got to move on and keep going. Those are my words of advice to change you violence and help are community stay safe and strong.

The abuser had been abused as he was a child and ran away from home. He had been back and forth to orphanages all over the U.S. and had a rough childhood. This is the cycle of abuse; it had started with him and now passed down to my family. I am the one who can stop this cycle. If I don't take action now then this cycle will go on and never stop till someone makes the life changing act. This can also tie in with bullying and anything. If you stop this cycle now you are helping youth violence, you are changing this world. This change cannot be stopped by one person it takes everyone so step in a help stop this cycle. Those are my words of advice to change you violence and help are community stay safe and strong.

Keisha Williams - 8th Grade
Kanab Middle School - Teacher, Jeanine Johnson

Do the Right Thing

A type of youth violence is bullying. Over 3.2 millions kids are victims of being bullied. 160,000 kids skip school to avoid being bullied every day. One of four kids being bullied drop out of school because of the people who bully them. 75 percent of school shootings are linked to bullying. More than half the students have witnessed bullying in some manner. When a child or teen is bullied repeatedly, the child could lose interest in school making their grades drop dramatically. Cyber bullying is an easier way to get away to bully a child. If you cyber bully, the chances of them committing suicide are two to nine more likely. Verbal and physical can both be deadly. Bullies can also be affected, they are more likely to commit crimes now and later in life. These statistics show that our learning capital has become a true battle ground for you, for everyone. What can we do to decline the number of kids being bullied?

Two of three teens are bullied every year. How do we stop it? The answer is simple. The by-standers can be the most effective. Some of them are too scared to stand up for the victim. Why? Because they might lose popularity, they might become a victim, or they might be labeled as a tattle tale. Once you see someone being bullied, go tell an adult or the principal. Everytime you see an incident you must report it to someone you trust. Or, be a friend to the kid.

How does bullying affect someone else's school life? Many kids skip school to avoid being bullied. School is supposed to be a happy place where kids are able to share their smiles, not a battleground. Thousands of kids drop out because of bullies. This is serious, someone needs to take action whether you are the bully, the victim, the by-stander, or the teacher! Any kind of violence should be kept on record in case it happens again. People need to understand that words hurt. Words can drive people to have so much anger, that school shootings can occur. Three out of four school shootings happen because of what people are saying to them

inside of school. Can you look into someone's eyes and know everything that's going on in someone's life? Impossible. Think before you talk.

Cyber bullying is a vast deal. People cyber bully because they are too scared to say it to someone's face. Block them or report them to the website. There is one thing that stands out on bullying online, and that's evidence. You can literally save the evidence for later. You have verification that someone is bullying you. Save it, take it to an adult, and show them to the school. Then, if the school won't do anything then take it to the bully's parent's. You could even try befriending the bully. Maybe they are bullying you cause they don't know what you are going through. It's not always that easy, but it may help stop youth violence.

How can verbal abuse be deadly? What about physical abuse? Verbal abuse is when you are saying something to someone in a very rude or inappropriate manner. Physical abuse is when you are touching someone. Verbal abuse echoes inside people's heads and will always be there. You can't take back the words you have said to people. Your apology can be accepted, but the mental scars will always be there. People will remember every word you have said to them, so make it count. You want people to look back and think about how nice and sweet you were. Not the mean words that you would say to them every day. Physical punches will leave scars that people can see on the outside. When you punch someone, or tease them with your words, always remember that, that person is going through something you know nothing about. If you want to make it in this world, respect the golden rule and treat people the way you want to be treated!

In conclusion, there are many ways to stop bullying. You can tell an adult about what's going on, or respect the golden rule can help restrict bullying. Also, you can save your evidence and prove it to others what's going on. Please, think before you say something. You may be hurting someone else's feeling without knowing it. Take action, and help prevent bullying in your

community. Remember to not be a bystander, go tell an adult before things get worse. Stand up for the lonely kid being bullied. Or be a friend to the bully, they need a friend too. You can save a life. All it takes is for you to take into account about how your actions can affect a life. It can affect someone to have stomach aches, headaches, depression, sadness, anxiety, and suicide.

Everyone needs a friend, and everyone needs to stand up to bullying. Sometimes, telling a teacher isn't enough. Telling the kid to cut it out can make a difference. Be brave and stand up for whoever is being bullied. There is no excuse to bully, please respect everyone around you.

"Pulling someone down will never help you reach the top." -Kushandwisdom. Please take that quote in consideration. You can never get anywhere in the world making someone's life worse.

"Don't worry about those who talk behind your back, they're behind you for a reason."

-Curiano.com

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