

Unity Award Recipients

- 2015 -

The “Together Against Bullying” Award

Awarded for taking action to prevent and change an attitude or behavior that physically or emotionally hurts, harms, or humiliates someone.



Leah Fuda, Halle West, and Alexis Zara

“Three students from our high school DECA organization took the lead to bring attention to bullying prevention in our community! They planned, organized and carried out a ‘Bigger than Bullying’ 5K run in November as a part of our school district kick-off for bullying prevention. More than 150 participants from our small, rural community came together to support this effort! This very successful 5K brought attention to the issue of bullying, but also was a way to bring together community businesses who were sponsors, parents and students who were participants, along with others who now are aware of the bullying prevention program in our school district.

Starting from ‘scratch,’ these students began planning in early September to make this event happen. There was a long list of things to consider: PR, registration, setting entrance fees, ordering wristbands and t-shirts for participants, securing sponsors and other prizes. All of this in addition to finding a location and learning how to conduct a 5K including timing, signs, setting a course, water and snacks at the finish plus a thousand other little details! It was impressive to watch the planning progress and very rewarding to see the event come together — even on a very cold November morning!

At the conclusion of the 5K, the proceeds were donated to the school district’s bullying prevention program in a special presentation at the December School Board meeting. These funds were used to purchase materials in support of the bullying prevention program at York Middle School and York One Academy. These three students learned so much from planning the 5K, but also highlighted the importance of bullying prevention to everyone in our community.”

—Nominated by Sue Hilton, Educator

The “United for Kindness” Award

Awarded for demonstrating outstanding act(s) of being helpful to others.



Abby Belcher

“Abby created ‘Abby’s Pledge’ when she was just 9 years old, after her sister who has Asperger’s was bullied ruthlessly by school cheerleaders. This is a pledge that she created to help encourage other people to stand up against bullying. Abby travels across the country to share her story with others and to show that no matter how young a person is, they can make a real difference. She attends training sessions that are usually reserved for social workers, police officers and counselors just so she can learn different ways to help others to stand up against bullying. (It was at one of these events that I met her.) Thousands of people across the country have taken her pledge and she has volunteer supporters (including me) across the country who help spread her message to stand up against hate. She has created a website that people can go on which houses resources parents can use

to get help from other sources, and she also helps to give kids the tools and provides lifeline numbers if they are depressed. Abby came to talk to our group about bullying and we took her pledge. Abby consistently puts others before herself. She is even working on a new bill that she hopes to present to congress this year. Abby also created a campaign called the 'Be Brave Backpack' drive for which she distributes new backpacks filled with school supplies to kids living in domestic violence or homeless shelters so they don't have to go to school and get bullied by others because they lack supplies. She also created the 'Brave the Elements' hats, gloves and sandwich drive which she went out and fed the homeless in places most would not dare to travel. She mows other people's grass, pulls weeds and does chores in the community to help raise money for her cause. She is humble and an inspiration to all. And, she also became a school cheerleader to help break the stereotypes that cheerleaders are mean. But most of all, she is living her pledge to 'Notice and take action' daily, proving that no matter what the circumstance, anyone can make a real difference in their community." —*Nominated by Donna Smith, Educator*

"Abby is a young lady I met when we started our Anti-Bullying crusade. Knowing her and seeing her passion about bullying prevention motivated me to push our campaign even harder. She motivates all she comes in contact with, and she doesn't take bullying lightly. Abby founded her own organization and travels with her own money to talk about bullying. This young lady is REMARKABLE! She speaks with a passion and continues her fight against bullying." —*Nominated by Jeanette Greenwood, Educator*

The "United for Acceptance" Award

Awarded for looking beyond the differences of others and celebrating what makes each person unique.



Mindy Murtley

"My wife works full time as a RN and during her off time, evenings and weekends, she and another lady have been working continuously to start a local non-profit organization called Buddies not Bullies Inc. She has reached out to the school districts, the local mayors and the community to provide support, education and resources to the citizens and communities. She is devoted to making a difference. As a full time nurse, she never stops working. She is bringing a walk/5K run to the Duluth area. The support she has received is amazing from schools willing to work alongside her. I believe her tireless efforts sometimes may go unnoticed, however I notice and what she has taken on is amazing. Our community was lacking this in our area, and she has come forth to make a difference for everyone." —*Nominated by Scott Murtley*

The "United for Inclusion" Award

Awarded for outstanding acts to help others feel like they belong and know that they aren't alone.



Girl Scout Troop 4073

"The Girl Scout troop at Piedmont Elementary School worked with the school to start a Unity Day event in 2014. The troop and other students made signs for 'Wear Orange for Unity Day' and 'Be a Buddy, Not a Bully.' A brownie who is on the autism spectrum designed a patch for the scouts and orange tee shirts for the troop and some teachers. The troop will be in that school for 2 more years and hopes to build the event every year." —*Nominated by Loretta Ronding*