

Red Ribbon Week at Springhill Elementary John Abrams Presents "The Bully Game"

By Jean Follmer



John Abrams involves the young audience

Photo submitted

Red Ribbon Week, a nationwide youth drug prevention program, came to a close after many related activities at Lamorinda schools. Part of preventing future drug use is to foster positive character development and saying "no" to bullying can help. Many drug users have been either a bully or the victim of one. Springhill's Red Ribbon theme was "Good Character-Good Decisions" and was coordinated by Karen Elliott. An anti-bullying program may reinforce "Good Character-Good Decisions" and help keep kids out of trouble.

Springhill Elementary kicked off Red Ribbon Week with a presentation by actor John Abrams called "The Bully Game". Mr. Abrams developed the program in 2006 and said it "caught on like wildfire." He saw a need in a parenting conference he facilitates where he asks three questions: 1) Is your child a bully? 2) Has your child been bullied? and 3) Do you remember a bullying situation from your childhood? A few folks answered "yes" to #1, more to #2 and every one to #3.

The bullying presentation is given separately to grades 1-3 and grades 4-5 with slightly different subject matter. When asked what bullying was, a 1st grader replied "Pushing people out of the way and turning them into little balls."

This drew a good laugh from the crowd. Abrams responded that bullying can be "big people picking on little people that can't defend themselves". He told the kids a good way to avoid being bullied is to stick with your friends. The three most common bullying locales are the playground, the hallway and the bathroom.

Presented in a humorous, magical Game Show format, students were called as contestants. They were given whistles to use as buzzers and were asked questions to differentiate between teasing and taunting, gossip and chatter, tattling and telling and bystander and witness. Abrams asked questions and the contestants blew their whistles if they knew the answer. Abrams called on the first whistle blower, score was kept and ties were broken.

The students did a great job differentiating between bullying and non-bullying acts. They recognized that one friend calling another a "chicken head" was teasing while a bigger student taking the seat of a smaller student was taunting. Teasing leads to taunting when "feelings get hurt" and taunting is a bullying act. Abrams stressed to "never start gossiping" because it's a monster and when it comes to cyber gossiping, it never goes away. He said you "tattle to get someone into trouble" and "tell to get some-

one out of trouble". Abrams assured it's ok to tell in order to help someone. A witness "tells" and a bystander doesn't. When a student sees bullying going on, he needs to help. If he can't help directly, he needs to find the nearest adult and alert them. With the 4th and 5th graders, he unraveled a huge roll of toilet paper & yelled "wipe out bullying!" It seems potty talk can be a teaching tool...that balance between humor and serious subject matter.

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