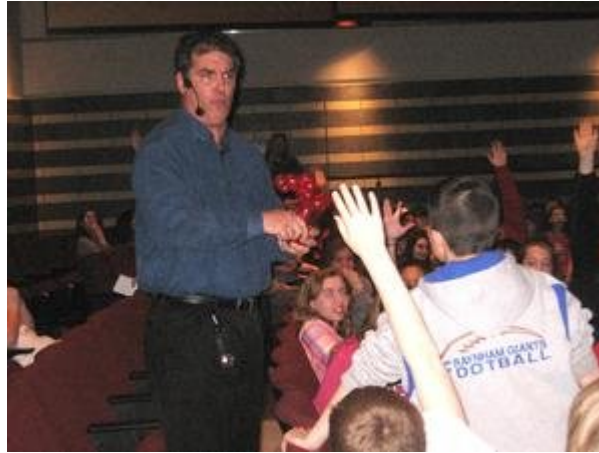


Anti-bullying message hits home with Raynham students

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Jim Jordan hands out balloon animals along with his anti-bullying message.

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By Susan Parkou Weinstein

Raynham Call

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Raynham —

Jim Jordan was a tall, strapping quarterback at a Canadian high school when he was bullied by a student from another school.

Almost 30 years later, he hasn't forgotten how small the attack made him feel.

"Anyone can become a victim," Jordan, president of ReportBullying.com, says.

Now 46, he is using that experience from his youth, mixing it with his talents as a clown, a magician and motivational speaker to bring an important message to students.

For the past seven years, Jordan has gone into schools all over North America to talk about the dangers of bullying, especially in the Internet age.

“If we’re going to stop bullying, we’re going to have to do it together,” he told students at the Raynham Middle School Thursday.

Jordan kept the students’ attention with funny animal balloons, tricks and games.

His underlying message was serious. Bullies try to control their victims physically, emotionally and mentally but their actions are fueled by the inaction of passive bystanders.

The complacent bystander is complicit, he said. Bullies will never stop until bystanders stop standing by.

“Boys and girls, if you do not speak up it will get worse,” he said. “You are the ones with the power. It only takes one student to do the right thing.”

Boys typically use physical tactics like punching and throwing objects at their victims. Girls more often use words, gossip and stares, he said.

Cyberbullying, or bullying over the Internet, can make anyone the perpetrator or victim of bullying because of its anonymity.

After the presentation, the students said they got the message.

Sixth-graders Zach McCarthy and Matt Thurber said they would definitely report an incident of bullying from now on.

Classmate Vijay Vedachalam, 11, said he once protected another child from a bully in school.

“I told him ‘I know how you feel,’” he said.

Assistant Principal Richard Florence said everyone at the school “had the power to stand up to bullying.”

Jordan said the problem of bullying must be stopped before it leads to life-long trauma or suicide.

It’s not about getting kids suspended from school, he says.

He is heartened when he has an immediate impact. By the time he finished a recent presentation in Rochester, students were lining up outside the principal’s office to report acts of bullying.

He also said Raynham was the first school system he visited in seven years where the police were working with parents and school officials on the problem. Both Police Chief Lou Pacheco and Raynham School Resource Officer Louis Pacheco attended the presentation.

“This is a community problem. The police need to know what’s going on and what the teachers and the kids know,” Jordan said.

Bullying has been well-publicized recently in Massachusetts because of the suicide of a South Hadley High School student who had been a victim of cyberbullying.

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