

the CHARACTER network



Volume 1 Number 2

BULLY ALERT!™ BY JIM LORD

When she was in the first grade, Francine could read better than anybody else in the class! In fact, she could read better than any of the 4th graders—when she was in the first grade! She had a natural talent for being able to read well, but she knew that just having the talent wasn't enough. She worked hard—every day—to learn bigger words, to read long sentences more smoothly, and to read thicker books. All of the kids in Francine's first grade class were learning to read—some better than others—except for one boy. He couldn't read at all. When Mrs. Williams, the teacher, would call on him to read aloud, he just had to sit there. He couldn't do anything, and it was almost like he could feel the others looking at him. He was so embarrassed, and that was bad enough, but things got a whole lot worse. You see, there were some bullies in the class who would laugh at him, and tease him, and even call him names—all because he couldn't read. It got so bad that he didn't even want to try anymore. Well, Francine decided to do something about it. After school one day, while she was waiting for her parents to pick her up, she sat down beside the boy who couldn't read. She offered to help him, and that's exactly what she did. Soon, the boy learned that he really could read when someone showed him how! Francine helped him everyday for a long time, and by the end of the school year, he had become the second best reader in the class! Think about this: Earlier in that school year, since Francine was such a good reader, and the boy could not read at all, she could have been a terrible bully to him. She could have been a bully to the bullies, because she could read much better than they could! But she chose to help instead of to hurt, and instead of becoming a bully, Francine became a hero.

The preceding story is an example from the "Bully Alert"™ CD series produced and distributed by The Character Network for use on elementary school intercom systems.

PHYSICAL SECURITY IS IMPORTANT

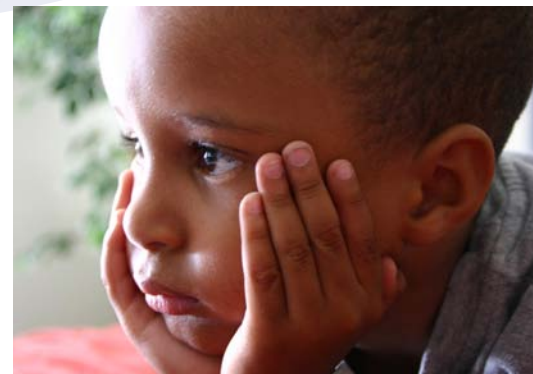
... But So is Emotional Security

In the wake of Columbine, Jonesboro, and Virginia Tech, the subject of bullying has gained a great deal of attention. And certainly those who can help steer young people to a better way of thinking hope to see these extreme occurrences become only a part of our history—not our future.

Monitoring the profiles of those quietly walking outside of "normal" parameters, responding to verbal and written threats, and scanning for hidden weapons have become a way of life for the times in which we live. Physical security has become equally as important as food, clothing, and shelter.

But what about emotional security? In regard to bullying, what about the kinds of bullying that continue to ruin lives in subtle ways? The negative remarks, the teasing, the snickering, and the ostracization? And what about the emotional INSECURITY that can cause such behavior? ([Click here to access The Character Network Newsletter, Volume 1 Number 1, May 2007. Read the article entitled Bullies, Victims, and Enablers: What We Have in Common.](#))

This newsletter is provided free of charge on a monthly basis by The Character Network and its contributors (real people telling real stories) to address such topics. Please consider it a resource, a tool, to help young people (and teachers, and parents)



learn the importance of treating one another with personal respect and dignity—to help learn the importance of being encouragers rather than discouragers. If you have not already subscribed, please do so now. It's easy and it's FREE! Just [click here](#) to subscribe, and you will automatically receive this newsletter each month. There is absolutely no obligation, and you may unsubscribe at any time.

The Character Network Newsletter is a FREE monthly resource for use in your Proactive Bully Prevention efforts. It also offers Positive Personal Vision for the lives of young people and for those working with youth. To access current AND previous issues, simply click this link to our [newsletter archives](#).

A MOM'S HEARTBREAK

Watching your child successfully grow and develop physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually is the greatest satisfaction there can be in this life—listening to the excitement in his voice as he spins dreams that reach the stars. It doesn't matter whether or not those particular dreams ever come true. The fact that he dreams and expects such accomplishment from himself is proof that he is truly living life to its fullest. And what more can any parent want for a child? After all, this is America and the sky is not even a limit! Right? Not necessarily...

When our very bright, musically gifted son was in the sixth grade, he had the goal of being a world traveling orchestra director some day. And anyone who knew him personally would have really had no trouble accepting that as a practical reality of the future. But something frightening began happening even by the beginning of the seventh grade. One by one the friends he had studied and played with through childhood began to change, and in every single case those changes included beginning to notice that our boy was a little overweight and not as athletic as they were. Gym coaches either joined in the taunts or did nothing to stop the other boys. None of them were impressed with his musical abilities anymore as they had been in earlier years. They began getting up and moving to another table when he walked in to sit with them. The rejection led to wanting to miss school, church, and social events. Grades began

to drop. Sense of belonging no longer existed and it all added up to a terrible case of depression to the point of suicidal thoughts and threats.

Before you wonder, let me assure you we appealed to teachers, principals, school counselors, church workers. Basically, everyone had the same "Don't bother me with your problems" smoke screen. It goes like this: "That's just the way kids are!" Yes, that is the way some kids are, and because we leave them to be the natural bullies they are, other kids are hurt along the way and the kid-bullies grow up to be adult-bullies who make bad neighbors, bad bosses, bad politicians, etc. At the risk of being crude, what if we never potty trained our kids and simply used the excuse, "That's just the way kids are?" Obviously, that question does not merit an answer.

My son? Oh, he moved from one school to the other. He had become a total target for bullies as though he had a big flashing neon sign on his chest. Private schools, public schools, even church schools, and church itself were all the same when it came to the fear he developed of walking into a roomful of his peers. Smart, gifted to the point of genius, and so emotionally crippled, it is unbelievable and heart-breaking to this day. Dreams shattered. Potential wasted. If you are one who just passes it off as "That's just the way kids are," then it's good that you and I will probably never meet. The bystanders,

both kids and adults, who stood on the sidelines observing the destruction of our beautiful son could have done something—anything—to overpower the bullies. They could have helped to save a precious life that will now be forevermore scarred—but they didn't. Too dramatic, you say? May you never have to walk in these shoes.

I appreciate this opportunity to tell my story. I sincerely hope this wonderful forum grows and that others will benefit from contributing their own stories, and/or reading about how devastating the acts of bullying can be.

— An elementary school teacher and heartbroken mother

We want you to feel free to share your stories. Maybe, as a child, you were bullied by a peer, a relative, a parent, or even a teacher. Tell your story! Talk about how it made you feel and how it affected your life. Tell how you overcame or how you are still dealing with the results. Even if you have not suffered personally, you have certainly witnessed a bullying situation—your neighbor, your child, your student. Tell about what you saw, and how (or if) it was resolved. Maybe you were the bully. Talk about how you came to realize there is a better way. We see The Character Network as becoming a viable Network for people who genuinely want to make a difference in the way people treat each other. You never know how you might impact someone else's life by sharing your experiences! If you want an article byline, fine. If you wish to remain anonymous, that's fine, too. Just send your stories, your comments, or your messages to: Newsletter@TheCharacterNetwork.com. We're asking your help to grow this much needed resource.

campus

PRESENTATIONS

by The Character Network™

SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

Jim Lord's live presentations for elementary school students are fun, motivating and inspiring. They cause even the youngest children to think about their relationships with others as they learn about heroes who help people and bullies who hurt people. Students also learn to visualize themselves in the future and how to become their own heroes by preparing now to make their adult lives better!

FAMILY ASSEMBLIES

Presentations for families are conducted in the evening and are designed to help parents understand what their children are learning in school about bullying. Practical tips are shared to enable parents to further support these concepts at home.

ADMINISTRATORS/FACULTY PROGRAMS

Jim brings a new perspective to the subject of "Bully Prevention", and faculties can learn how to help students visualize their own futures. Tips and life-applications are given to help motivate each of your students to enthusiastically begin preparing for that future!

Call 800-364-6883 to bring Jim's life-changing encouragement to your campus!

ROLE MODELS

BY JOHANNA KRAUTER

Positive role models are everywhere. They are the people that help you through your day. But, most of all, they are the people who help you through your life.

At school positive role models are teachers, coaches, principals, and counselors. They are in charge partially because they are positive role models. Sometimes it might seem like they were put on this earth to annoy us, especially at school, but they are actually trying to help us make the right choices. Those choices will follow us even after we get out of school. If there were no positive role models at school, it would be complete chaos, because the kids wouldn't have good examples to follow. In addition, when there are more

positive role models in school, there is less bullying and violence.

Sometimes positive role models can be friends in school. Some younger kids might not really understand life yet, but because they have positive role models and make good choices, they themselves become positive role models. You, yourself, could be a positive role model and not even know it. It involves good manners, following the "golden rule," and making good choices. It really feels good when people look up to you for setting a good example. The great thing about it is that it's in some way contagious. When a good example is set in class, everyone else wants to do the right thing too!

Our success as students revolves

around having positive role models. Some role models might teach us lessons about life, some might teach us how to make the right choices, and some positive role models may even show us how to have fun and "make the most of it." These are life lessons every student deserves, and they are lessons we will use forever.



Johanna Krauter is a student at Sam Rayburn Middle School in Bryan, Texas. This essay has been reprinted by permission of The Texas Safe School Center, San Marcos Texas.

Johannah was 2nd Place Winner in the 7th Annual Middle School Essay Contest, hosted by the Texas School Safety Center. This year, TxSSC received over 1,000 essays pertaining to topics such as bully prevention, making positive choices, the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and violence in America's schools. Watch for the next contest to be announced on the [TxSSC website](http://csccs.txstate.edu/txssc/txssc_contests.htm#essay): http://csccs.txstate.edu/txssc/txssc_contests.htm#essay

A REFLECTION OF YOUR FUTURE™

BY JIM LORD

How many times have you heard people say if they had it all to do over again, they would . . . do whatever it is that they would do differently? What they really mean is that somewhere along the way, they made some bad choices!

So, I'm thinking—choices must be very important if bad ones produce regrets. Many people are in bad health, because they made choices to live unhealthy life styles. Some people are in jail, because they made choices to break laws.

Others live disappointing lives because they make careless choices about work ethic, education, finances, and relationships.

Most choices that produce unsatisfying results are made spontaneously, but they are still choices—every one of them. Life is a series of choices. Even the little ones are important, and worthy of your careful consideration.

"A Reflection of Your Future™" is a series of 1-minute audio segments broadcast on middle school and high school intercom systems as part of a Positive Personal Vision program of The Character Network.

Recommended Reading



Don't Laugh at Me

By Steve Seskin and Allen Shamblin

[Click here to order.](#)



Travel Cheap Online

By former elementary school principal Sandra Stewart

[Click here to order](#)



THE BEGINNING OF A HERO™: THE DANNY THOMAS STORY

BY JIM LORD



It was four o'clock in the morning and Amos Jacobs was fast asleep. Suddenly there came a scream from the front room where Amos' baby brother had just been bitten by a sewer rat. In those days, a rat bite almost certainly meant death. That's when Mrs. Jacobs promised in her heart that if her baby would just live, she would spend a whole year begging for pennies to give to poor people. Well, the baby did recover, and Mrs. Jacobs, who was very poor herself, did raise money for other people who

desperately needed it. She always followed through on what she promised.

When Amos grew up, he wanted to make a career in show business, because he could be a very funny man. But times were very hard for him in the beginning. It looked like he might not make it, and he didn't have any money. Then, remembering his mother's example, he decided to make a promise, too. He promised that if he became a successful entertainer, he would use his money and his influence to build a place where sick children could get better.

Well, as actors often do, Amos Jacobs

changed his name. He became Danny Thomas, and eventually he became a huge success. Soon, Danny Thomas knew it was time to make good on his promise, and in 1962, he created [St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#), a place where now thousands and thousands of children have gone to get the best medical care around. And it was first made possible by one man who learned about keeping promises when he was just a child. That man was Danny Thomas, a very special hero.

The preceding story is true, and is an example from "The Beginning of a Hero™" CD series produced and distributed by The Character Network for use on elementary school intercom systems.

THROUGH THE EYES OF AN OUTCAST

BY KAT CORRERO

You see them everyday, sitting alone in our school hallways, being made fun of by your so-called friends. They are the kids you ignore at your lunch tables; they are the kids that you laugh at after they walk away. They are the boys most girls wouldn't condescend to talk to. They are the girls most guys pick on continually during class, or better yet, refuse to even acknowledge. These boys and girls are the unpopular, the loners, the losers, the geeks, the weirdoes, the outcasts.

We all have done it: made fun of the kids that just don't quite fit in with whatever group we belong to. Yet, very few of us are brave enough or strong enough to stand up for them. I see it everyday in the classroom. When one student starts making fun of someone else, the rest just join in. Do any of you ever stop to wonder what it is like to be an outcast? I know at some point in your life you have felt like you don't belong, maybe not in school, but possibly somewhere else.

So, take a step in an outcast's shoes for a while, let me walk you through their day. Their day begins with sitting alone in the hallway before the bell rings, and then on the way to class they are pushed and

shoved as if being completely ignored. When they enter the classroom they are forced to sit alone, because all the other girls and boys must sit huddled together. I guess they feel safer in their tight "accepted" groups. Later, during lunch, the outcast must sit alone, once again. Or rather, if the outcast is brave enough, attempt to sit next to other people. Yet, after sitting down, he or she is completely ignored, and everyone at the table giggles when he or she finally walks away.

I hear many students in the hallways, all clustered together in their little groups, laughing, calling kids names, and attempting to trip them as they walk by. I don't quite understand the reason kids must do this. Is it because we all feel alone? Is it because we want to fit in so badly that we must completely rid ourselves of the nonconformists? Are we really that insecure that we must make others feel inferior? How would you feel?



Kathryn Corro of Loyola Prep High School in Shreveport, Louisiana, first published this column in the March 2007 edition of her school's student newspaper, The Flyer. It has since appeared in The Shreveport Times and is reprinted here by permission.

ABOUT THE FOUNDER JIM LORD

Jim Lord, founder of The Character



Network, is a long-time broadcaster and public speaker. A father of six, Jim can be available to bring his experience, insights, and encour-

agement to your students on any grade level campus, Kindergarten through High School. [Click here](#) to see what others are saying about Jim's presentations. Call 800-364-6883 to schedule an assembly program, teacher in-service, or workshop. For more information, email info@TheCharacterNetwork.com.

SEND US YOUR STORIES

Send us your story—whether as a child, as an adult, or as a professional who works with children. If you think your experience can help someone else, please send it! If selected, your story will be featured in a future edition of The Character Network™ newsletter. Send stories to:

Newsletter@TheCharacterNetwork.com

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