

# the CHARACTER network

Volume 1 Number 4

## BULLY ALERT!™ BY JIM LORD

Ray had worked for weeks on his science project. His assignment was to grow sugar crystals. It was a difficult assignment, but Ray was always up to a good challenge. First he studied all about different kinds of sugars. He was so surprised to learn all of the different sources for sugar! He carefully measured everything and finally he was ready to start the process of crystallizing liquid sugars. His display was perfect, and he was ready to bring it to class. It was now the big day—the class science fair. Everyone brought their projects. Ray had the best one in the class, but Ray's friend, (who sometimes really wasn't his friend) had the worst one. He had started his project only the night before because he kept putting it off. When he got to school and saw how good the others were and how bad his was, he became angry. Instead of realizing his own mistake, he quietly poured some water on Ray's project which completely ruined his sugar crystals! Just think...if Ray's friend had done his project the way he should have, he could have come to school feeling good about himself. He could have looked at Ray's project along with the other projects and said nice things about them which would have made Ray and the others feel even better about themselves! If that had been the path he had chosen, he could have started right there being a hero instead of being a bully. You see, that's where heroes start—just making the choice of helping instead of hurting.

From the "Bully Alert"™ CD series produced and distributed by The Character Network for use on elementary school intercom systems.

## you can make a DIFFERENCE.

It is a popular myth that suicide rates skyrocket during the Christmas holiday time. However, several recent studies show suicide rates are actually at their lowest during November and December. In 2004, after a study of sixty seven newspaper articles, The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania found that two out of three newspaper articles incorrectly reported statistics related to suicide at Christmastime.

According to the Suicide Prevention Centre in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, some reasons for a decline in suicide rates at Christmas include "the gathering of friends and relatives [who] surround and protect vulnerable people," and "an increased awareness of safety-nets available during this period (food banks, shelters, and outreach programs)."

But, does this mean that suicides do not occur during this time of year—triggered by loneliness and depression brought on by a lack of loving relationships, finances, or meaningful existence? Of course not.

For healthy-minded people, this is a time when it is easy to focus on immediate

family and friends, with celebrations among themselves. This year, why not also include others who may not have those family connections? Why not take some time this holiday season to visit someone you know (or know of) who is alone? And visit someone (more than once!) who is in a nursing home, or a hospital. Take some time to help out in a shelter or a soup kitchen! Why not



"adopt" a less fortunate person or an entire family for Christmas and keep in touch all year? You can certainly make a difference in someone's life with very little effort. And who knows . . . you may just prevent a statistic!

*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 [here](#) to access our website and click on the "Newsletters" link.*

# a letter to ME

by Martin Weatherford

I was listening to the radio recently and heard the song by Brad Paisley called "A Letter to Me." In the song, he explores the idea of writing a letter and sending it back in time to his 17-year-old self. The song intrigued me so much that I went out and bought the CD. But as I continued to listen, I realized there was so much more an adult could say to his or her teenage past. Paisley dwelt primarily on attempting to alleviate fears, telling his former self that everything would turn out okay. He did make reference to having wished he had learned Spanish and learned to type, and he gave himself advice to stop completely at a particular stop sign. But, as Paisley repeatedly emphasizes, those developmental years are often wasted by "not seeing past Friday night."

Opportunities often go un-pursued or even unrecognized. In my own life, there are many things I could have done at age 17 (and before) to have avoided a lot of lessons learned "the hard way." And now my grandson, who is about to turn 17, is climbing the same "fool's hill" that I did. I sent him a copy of the letter I gave to his mother when she was his age (and would have sent to my young self if I could have!). In essence, it said this: "Have fun while you're young, but not at the expense of your future. Don't consider that opportunities to learn are

nuisances. See them as treasures! You will be so glad you did. If someone tells you that you don't have the talent or ability to do something worthwhile, don't take it personally, and don't argue with them. Take it as a challenge, and quietly prove them wrong. If you have a passion and it is just a passing fad avoid it, and think about something else until it passes. If you have a passion that will help make the world around you a little better, spend the time and effort to thoroughly educate yourself about it before wasting your time collecting regrets. Work at discovering who you are by discovering your own talents and sharpening them. Be yourself, and don't pattern your thoughts and actions after other people you think are "cool" because they are being *themselves!* Get advice, and lots of it, from adults who have been where you want to go. Don't be embarrassed to ask questions about anything you don't understand. Learn to love yourself, but don't make who you are and what you do all about you. Truly care about those around you, especially about the less fortunate and always do something to help them. Truly care about your future self and your future family. Think about them often and ask yourself every day what you can do to help make life better for them."

## reader RESPONSE

After many years of working directly with children, today I work as an independent consultant and travel the country to provide training for local school districts and for individual campuses. Needless to say, I visit a lot of schools and I have seen a lot of different attitudes among faculty members. In your October issue, you printed a story about teachers being bullies themselves. Ironically, the day I read that story, I witnessed just such an event.

Often, I will work with the same school district for several days, and visit individual campuses to observe. One campus had scheduled an assembly presentation on the day I was there. As the students were filing in and quietly being seated, (much too quiet for my personal comfort zone) one young man, fourth, maybe fifth grade, greeted (barely above a whisper) a peer in another class. At that moment, a teacher, being very careful to avoid physical contact, began shouting at the young man in a tone that most would expect to include obscenities! Her red and angry face was no more than two inches from his. Everyone in the room could clearly hear her words and witness her example. I was so sad to see this bitter lady take out her frustrations on the student, and as time went on, others. Perhaps he/they had a history of being problem children. Perhaps not. But one thing is for sure—this kind of behavior from our leaders cannot possibly garner positive results. We wish for our students to adopt good character traits, but in doing so, we clearly must lead by example, not push with harshness.

I have visited many campuses where the administrators and faculties are unified in their obvious concern for the emotional and relational development of students. There are kind words and praise for accomplishment, and there is consistent (but not cruel) administration of discipline. In those cases, it is easy to see the positive results by simply observing the attitudes of the students.

Keep up the good work, and thank you for this resource.

—Appalled in Arizona.

## 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!**

# a TEACHER remembered

by Minette Trent

Every year at Christmastime, I send out my stack of cards, mostly heartfelt, a few obligatory—but every year one of the most special is addressed to Anne Holland, Shreveport.

Anne Holland was my third grade teacher. She seemed really old, but she was probably in her late thirties—short hair beginning to gray a bit, twinkling blue eyes, and always a smile for me. Mrs. Holland taught me to write in cursive, my multiplication tables, 0–12, and she made me want to be a better person.

I was a painfully shy child, but I desperately wanted Mrs. Holland to notice me. Every time I got up from my desk to go to the pencil sharpener or the trash can, I made a point of passing by her, just to touch her shoulder, and she never brushed me away. She could tell I was having a hard time fitting in with the other children, and so she quietly returned my gestures of affection.

Cursive writing came easily to me, and I remember once writing an entire page of “V’s” incorrectly so that Mrs. Holland might lean over my desk and correct me, as I’d seen her do with other students. However, she simply walked by quietly, placing her hand on my shoulder as she passed, just as I did to her every day. Maybe I should have been embarrassed that she had me figured out, but instead I glowed with pride that she knew I wouldn’t make such a mistake.

Mrs. Holland didn’t lead my class on some memorable Civil Rights march or help me mourn the death of John

Lennon. She wasn’t flamboyant; she wasn’t the sort of teacher who will go down in American history for some great or defiant act. She taught me cursive and multiplication, and she loved me. And she didn’t love me because I was the prettiest or the brightest or the most outgoing—those students are easily loved, and will always have their fill. Anne Holland loved me because she could see that, perhaps more than her other students that year, I truly needed to be loved.

As educators, we can become almost jaded to how very many lives we touch, and the great potential for leaving lasting impressions. The noise, the stress, the cutting-in-line, the coloring-out-of-the-lines—it is very easy to automatically focus our attention on the top students, and the bottom ones.

I was never a top student, nor was I a bottom student. Somewhere in the middle, I spent a lot of years just kind of lost in the crowd. I watched 12 years of teachers praise the “A” students and wring their hands over the troublemakers, and I watched it all from a fairly unnoticed vantage point.

But Mrs. Holland noticed me.

Now I am in my late thirties, with hair beginning to gray a bit. I know that I cannot possibly make note of the lives I’ve had an opportunity to touch, or opportunities I have missed—but I also know that I do try. And I know that I will never write a cursive “V” without thinking of the one year of simple love from my teacher that still brings a tear each Christmas card season.



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 forum 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](mailto:Newsletter@TheCharacterNetwork.com). We’re asking your help to grow this much needed resource.

## Recommended Reading



### Pay It Forward

By Catherine Ryan Hyde

*The book behind the movie.*

Read much of the book online by [clicking here](#).  
Learn about the real-life *Pay It Forward Foundation*  
created by Catherine Ryan Hyde!

[Click here to order](#)

## Recent Additions:

We want to thank the District and Campus Administrators of two school districts, the most recent additions for The Character Network school programs. Schools in Kingsville, (South) Texas and schools in Genoa, Illinois are now using The Beginning of a Hero/Bully Alert series on their campus intercom systems.

## THE BEGINNING OF A HERO™

# the BEVERLY CLEARY story

by Jim Lord



We all have some special friends who really only live in books we read about them. Do any of these friends sound familiar?

Ramona Quimby, Fudge, Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits, and Runaway Ralph? Do you remember the time when Ramona Quimby cracked a boiled egg on her head at school, at least she thought it was boiled, but her mother had forgotten to cook it. What a mess, and how

embarrassing! Well, if it had not been for a wonderful lady named Beverly Cleary, we wouldn't have those great friends like Ramona and her sister Beezus.

When Beverly was just a little girl in school, she had a hard time learning to read, but after she worked at it very hard, she found that she loved reading, especially books that were fun. In fact, she loved books so much, she decided to be a writer when she grew up. She went to college to learn to be a librarian but kept her dream about writing books. After she was married, her husband asked her one day why she didn't just go ahead and write a book. She laughed and said, "Because I never have a sharpened pencil?!" Well, the very next day, Mr. Cleary came home with a brand new

pencil sharpener so she could begin writing. First, she wrote about Henry Huggins and his dog Ribsy. And she just kept on writing, mostly about the everyday things that children do.

Of all her characters, Beverly Cleary said that Ramona is the most like she was as a child. She wanted the children who read her books to find characters like themselves. Most of all she wanted her books to be fun and funny like the ones she enjoyed reading as a little girl. She has reached her goal of making children everywhere happy with her books. She has become a 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.*

## a reflection of your FUTURE™

by Jim Lord


How many adults do you know who seem to have just stagnated where they are? They have only wishes of the future, while they try desperately to keep the bills paid. They often complain about their jobs and they are easily discouraged.

On the other hand, people who do incorporate vision are easy to spot! They are full of energy! They grow! They accomplish!

So, take some time right now to visualize who and where you want to be in your future, and keep that mental picture with you always.

Every time you look in the mirror, take a moment to remember that "future you!" It really will make a difference if you do.

*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.*



You see, adults who are burdened with life's responsibilities, and who are struggling along in life, were once young people who didn't visualize their futures and follow through.

## 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 encouragement 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](mailto: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](mailto:Newsletter@TheCharacterNetwork.com)

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