

Editorial & Opinions

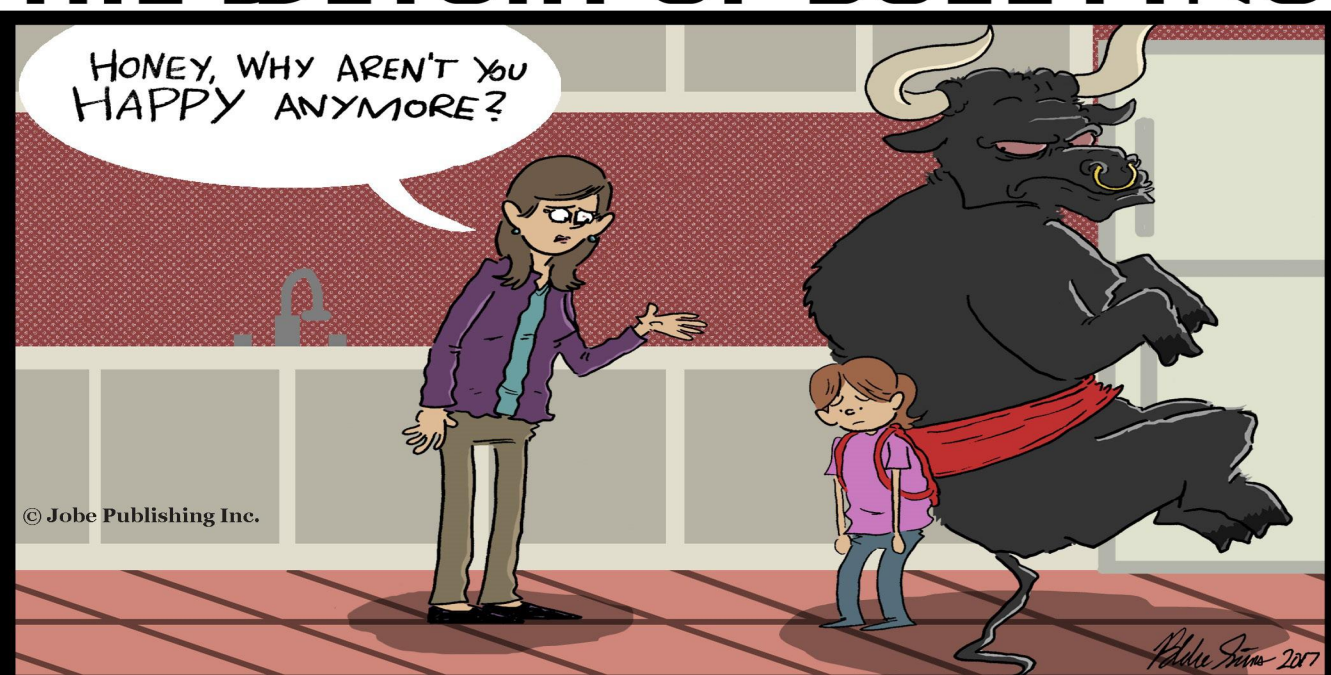
ENOUGH

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"Create an interactive environment that facilitates debate among readers on issues concerning them," Jeff Jobe, 1998

"Because you have stood with us in the past; we commit to never allow pressures to stop us from standing for you today," Jeff Jobe, 2010

THE WEIGHT OF BULLYING



Views expressed on this page are those of the author alone and not necessarily endorsed by this newspaper.

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Published each Wednesday.
Advertising package includes
total market penetration.
USPS 236-180
Periodicals

Postage Paid At Tompkinsville,
KY 42167

201 North Main Street, Suite A
Tompkinsville, KY 42167
SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
In Monroe and adjoining
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Bullying is a terrible weight

Adolescent and school-age bullying is a serious concern that affects the lives of all children — those getting bullied, those doing it, and those in close vicinity.

Going to school can be fun, but as depicted by the cartoon drawn by our political cartoonist Blake Sims, bullying can be a terrible burden to carry.

School should be about learning and building a foundation for success in both higher education, careers, and social interaction. Such lessons learned are the groundwork for how young people will handle difficulties as an adult.

No matter the background or home situation for a child they are all dealing with what they deem most important, making new friends and perhaps losing an old one.

They are beginning to negotiate their way in the world for the first time and allowing a single bullying scenario to play out affects all of our children to some degree but for the victim child the pressures are magnified exponentially.

School-aged children want to be liked and being subjected to taunts, teasing, and mockery depreciates a child's learning environment by adding anxiety about what could happen next.

If you combine physical abuses and social media into the mix, then true fear and humiliation raises the stakes to a dangerous level.

A parent can see physical bruises and they should look for them. But with social media harassment coming from texting or other forms of media, the hurt is not seen. It is inside pain and anguish. I encourage parents to monitor social media and engage their students in conversations regarding bullying. I also suggest quizzing friends of your children as this always helped me get the answers I was seeking.

With my son there were two occasions in which the discussion of bullying came up. I remember getting a call from Morgantown Elementary Principal. He asked me to come to his office the very last day of school. As I walked to the principal's office I passed my son sitting in the lobby outside the door. He said to me as I was lead past him; "Dad, I used words first." This was my son's way of saying he tried to get along with another boy, even used his words to say so but it just wasn't possible.

Sure enough, the principal detailed a scenario in which a young fella had picked on others over the year but on this day three classrooms came together and he just happened to make his way to my son. I'm sure this young man will give a little more respect to a man who says, "I would rather be your friend but ..."

I asked if my son was a bully and was told, "no, at this age they seem to want to determine the pecking order and your son isn't a trouble maker but he is one you don't want to start any trouble."

Another memory came within the first few weeks at South Green Elementary in Glasgow and my son shared that three boys were confronting him together because he was the new kid. Unannounced to my son, I visited the principal and I was told; "Those boys are good



JOBE FOR KENTUCKY

with Jeff Jobe

boys, never a problem and actually two of them have teachers as parents." I'm sure you know how this might make any parent feel and can probably imagine the tone of my response.

It seems not long after this meeting those same boys became my son's best friends. My son found that using "words first" and making it clear where he stood in a quiet but serious tone defused this situation and it seems those boys would rather be friends too.

I am no child psychologist nor will what works for one family work for another. Only a parent might know their child's capabilities however if struggling I'm comfortable there are counselors who can help. My approach came from having grown up on the wrong side of the tracks, no father to offer me advice and remembering the terrible feeling of not standing my ground once as a boy. I didn't want this for my son and I'm confident he never had it.

I remember discussing the issue with my daughters as teens and I asked them to write me a letter to the editor describing bullying. This exercise often worked for them because they liked to pretend to be employed at the newspaper. I remember reading and thinking they were astute in understanding bullying is not just pushing and shoving, but that laughing at jokes made about someone else is bullying too.

I have often thought a great assignment for every middle school student would be to put their thoughts regarding bullying in writing, read them out loud in class and submit to the hometown newspaper for publishing couldn't hurt to start those troubling years with some focus.

I asked our editorial team weeks ago to delve into this subject and you will find their work in all our newspapers this week. Our goal is to detail the proper method for a parent or guardian to log and monitor a complaint to protect their child, and to encourage all of us to take an active role in protecting our community.

Looking for someone to blame once a problem has consumed is too late; accepting responsibility is the only way we can save our families from this terrible fate and as for this community publisher; I'm here if you need me.

Jeff Jobe is founder and CEO of Jobe Publishing, Inc. His commentary reflects his personal views and does not reflect the views of personal or professional associations and affiliations. Reach him at jeff@jobeinc.com. Read his previously published commentary at www.jobeforkentucky.com

Letter to the Editor

Kentucky Retired Teachers Appreciation Week

Dear Editor:

October 15th - 21st has been proclaimed as Kentucky Retired Teachers Appreciation Week.

Kentucky's retired teachers have devoted their careers to the education and training of literally thousands upon thousands of Kentucky's youth. Retired teachers also represent the profession which was given the basic responsibility for launching the careers of local, state, and national leaders. Most importantly retired teachers have dedicated themselves to laying the foundation for the welfare of all members of our society.

I would like to express appreciation to all the Monroe County Retired Teachers for the many years of service to Monroe County students, and for all the volunteer service given to our community. We are fortunate that Monroe County Retired Teachers continue to support our community through volunteer service. Last year the Monroe County Retired Teachers donated over 28,582 volunteer hours through community service in Monroe County.

"Reaching Out In Our Community" continues to be the theme for our members. Some of the community projects the retired teachers participate in include: The Backpack Program. This program is designed to help students have healthy foods over the weekends. MCRTA members donate money for this project; Retired teachers also assist with the Feed Kentucky Food Drive by bringing non-perishable foods to the Monroe County Family Resource Center for distribution. School supplies are also donated by retired teachers and given to the Family Resource Centers so students can have needed supplies. Thousands of hours have been donated by collecting and compiling data for a second volume of The Early School Days in Monroe County. The completed book about Monroe County Schools should be on sale next summer. The publication of this book will help preserve for the future generations, the educational heritage of those who taught and attended rural schools in Monroe County.

This year the retired teachers will also be making plans to help Monroe County celebrate its' 200th Birthday in 2020.

Retired teachers rendered valuable volunteer work not for profit, but to contribute to a greater cause - the love and concern of one's fellow man and society.

I appreciate and salute all of our Monroe County Retired Teachers for making our community a better place.

I ask that you help celebrate Monroe County Retired Teachers by taking time during Retired Teachers Appreciation Week to thank a retired teacher or teachers who have made a positive difference in your life.

Cecilia Stephens
MCRTA President

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