

DELETE THE DIGITAL DRAMA

An Initiative to Stop Cyber Bullying

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From Marietta College to Marietta Middle

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An Introduction to the Initiative

Cyber bullying occurs when a child or teenager is bullied or harassed through electronic means such as the Internet, social media sites like Facebook, text messaging and even through the newest video games. Chances are - if your child hasn't been cyber bullied yet, they will before the end of this school year. Due to the growing prevalence of this problem around the country and in our own community, Marietta College graduate student Megan Archer decided to initiate a media campaign surrounding the issue of cyber bullying. Her goal for this project is to generate awareness about the problem cyber bullying poses to children, teenagers and even adults. Through her efforts, Megan hopes to help parents realize the serious dangers cyber bullying can cause to a child's mental, emotional and, in the worst cases, physical health.

Since August 2011, Megan has conducted focus groups with students from Marietta Middle School in order to better understand what students have experienced in their own lives. Based on the knowledge she has gained from her discussions, she has organized various activities and events to reach her goal of raising awareness of the problem. These activities have included an anti-cyber bullying poster contest, the production of a radio commercial and an interactive outdoor event which will be held in the spring. Megan will wrap up her campaign in May and although her work will be finished, she hopes that parents will continue her efforts by monitoring what their children do online and reiterating the message that cyber bullying is not a joke. It is not funny. It is not cool. It is just cruel.

Winners of "Stop Cyber Bullying" Poster Contest

According to The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children, drawing is a natural language for children, especially for the child who has had painful experiences and unspoken fears or anxieties. It helps to externalize emotions and events too painful to speak out loud. With this in mind, Megan decided to organize a "Stop Cyber Bullying" poster contest in November 2011. Students were given three weeks to submit an 11x17 poster with original ideas. Prizes such as an iPod shuffle or gift certificates to favorite stores were offered to the first, second and third place winners as incentives to participate. Nine students submitted entries for the contest, coming up with creative slogans to Stop Cyber

Bullying such as "Report it, Don't Support It!" and "Cyber Bullying is the Worst Kind of Virus - Let's Stop it Before it Spreads." Three winners were chosen based on originality,

creativity and use of language that showed a basic knowledge of ways to stop cyber bullying. First place winner Michal Booth won an iPod shuffle and a \$15 iTunes gift card. Second place winner Alexis Palazzo won a \$50 gift card to Wal-Mart and third place winner Lex Presley won a \$25 gift card to Wal-Mart. All participants were given

a certificate of "Great Effort" and a \$10 movie gift certificate to Regal Cinemas at Grand Central Mall in Vienna.



Participants standing in front of their posters which were displayed in the lunch room for all students to see. From L to R: Caleb Scharff, Lex Presley, Alexis Palazzo, Michal Booth and Alexis Dalrymple. Not pictured: Emily Lang, Kenneth Daily, Jessica Craig and Ashton Davis.

Cyber Bullying and Facebook

Based on a survey conducted on students from cyber bullying focus groups, 97% of Marietta Middle School students have access to Facebook. With this in mind, it is vital for parents and guardians to realize the influence this social media site has on children. In the last several years, Facebook has become a breeding ground for bullies - encouraging young teens to photoshop and post distorted images of enemies, post mean or offensive statuses about "friends" or even create Facebook groups with titles like "The Ugliest People at Our School." The reality of a phenomena like Facebook is children, teens and even adults have access to a person's private life like they never have before. If a student were to be bullied

at school before the evolvement of a site like Facebook, then the bullying would stop there. The student would endure that torment from 8 a.m. until the close of the school day. As if that isn't bad enough, now that interactive video games, chat rooms and sites like Facebook have developed, children can no longer depend on the security and anonymity of their own homes. This is not to say that Facebook is all bad - in fact, Facebook is great for keeping in touch with family, networking with businesses or just chatting with friends. However, parents must be aware of what Facebook users are capable of in this technologically advanced age and why they should monitor what their children are doing on a site as popular and readily available as Facebook. Don't ban

your kids from using the site - just keep their online activities in YOUR sight. Monitor what your children do online before it's too late.

Tips for Parents

- Ask child questions about online activities. Do not hesitate to ask if they have experienced cyber bullying.
- Inform them about Facebook's Report Button which allows them to report any instances of harassment or cyber bullying.
- Consider creating your own Facebook profile and adding child as your 'friend.' This is the easiest way to monitor their Facebook activity.

Radio Personalities: Students Participate in Anti-Cyber Bullying PSA



Three Marietta Middle School students recently had the opportunity to have their voices heard on Results Radio. Bret Treadway, Viola Sullivan and Anna-Claire Myers, all 7th graders, were asked to participate in an anti-cyber bullying radio PSA. These students took time out of their evening to practice various scripts and record their voices on the Marietta College radio station equipment. In the end, two PSAs were produced and sent to all six of the Results Radio stations. Each PSA targeted parents and community members and urged them to monitor what their children are doing online and on the phone. To listen to these student stars, tune in to any Results Radio Station: 95XIL, 99.1 FM, 103.1 FM, 106.1 FM, AM 1230 or AM 1050. The PSAs will play on these stations

until December 31, 2012. Overall, Results Radio donated over \$7,500 in commercial airtime for this cyber bullying campaign. Not only that, but Results Radio posted the MP3 files on their LinkedIn page and the Facebook page of the Parkersburg Battered Women's Shelter. Here is a big shoutout to the Results Radio team for their generosity and cooperation in our efforts to make audiences more aware about the problems cyber bullying poses to children and young adults.

In the photo shown on the left, seventh grader Bret Treadway holds the mic in the Marietta College studio while producing one of the two anti-cyber bullying radio PSAs for Results Radio.