**EDITORIAL: Bullying on the rise, parents need to be aware**

Bullying is on the rise in America and the spike is causing concerns among school officials and parents.

While the act of bullying is as old as mankind, there are steps being taken to reduce intensity and number of incidents. The problem is large and getting worse as societal coarsening decreases civility in our world.

Schools are fighting back through education efforts, peer leadership and reaching out to the bullies and their parents. The latter group is key to breaking this cycle and allow all children a chance to get through school unmolested.

The old mantra about bullying just being a fact of life, doesn’t wash anymore. This goes way beyond someone beating up another kid for his lunch money, the crisis is at the point where victims of bullying are finding no way out other than suicide.

While experts debate the causes of increased bullying (domestic violence at home), society as a whole has to look at itself and see what lessons it is teaching our young people.

Television programs are filled with sarcasm, cynicism and materialism that teaches our young it’s OK to belittle someone for their income level, clothing choices, sexual identity and religion.

Talk radio and cable news programs are filled with hate and venom with anyone the host(s) disagree with. Have the wrong letter at the end of the your name, well it’s open season on you, my friend. And this goes for liberal and conservative hosts.

Even victims of bullying from one group can turn around and be a bully against others.

We like to, as a society, lift up athletes, teams and coaches as role models. But really, what do we see on the fields, in the arenas and the courts? Athletes being rewarded for intimidating their opponents, coaches running up the score on weaker teams and teams celebrated for behaving badly.

Kids of the 21st century have added online bullying to their arsenal as statistics are showing an uptick in occurrences,.

According to the website, [bullyingstatistics.org](http://bullyingstatistics.org/), the numbers are startling.

 About 42 percent of kids have been bullied while online with one in four being verbally attacked more than once.

About 77 percent of students have admitted to being the victim of one type of bullying or another.

About 35 percent of kids have been threatened online.

The American Justice Department bullying statistics show that one out of ever four kids will be bullied sometime throughout their adolescence.

Gov. Rick Snyder signed a bill into law that protects students from bullying in 2011, making the state the 48th to do so. Snyder said at the time he was also bullied as a child.

A movie titled “Bully” has been making the rounds of local school districts in their bid to bring enlightenment about bullying to their students, teachers, administrators and parents.

The documentary by Lee Hirsch depicts students and families of several communities across the nation and how those school districts responded.

The targets of the bullies ranged from a girl who has identified herself as a masculine-appearing lesbian, a teenage boy who is constantly abused by his classmates, a girl bullied by classmates for her looks and the families of two students who committed suicide after years of tormenting.

The gist of the movie is evident. Kids should be allowed to be themselves without someone else coming up and harassing them or beating them up.

But how to best stop the violence?

Saline Area Schools hosted the Bully documentary and a panel discussion to talk about ways to prevent students from bullying others and being bullied. The best way is for the bystanders who watch the bullying take place to report it to an adult.

The school doesn’t want to punish the bully, they want to help the youth to change his  behavior. By identifying the bullies, the schools can talk with the parents and find the root cause for the violence.

But can we wait for another tragedy before we step up as a society and put an end to the violence?