

## **OPINION: Anti-bully efforts could help avoid trauma later in life**

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It's hard to know just how much of it will alter the behavior of those inclined to bully, but schools' growing focus on the problem at the very least lets potential victims know there is support if they need it.

Stand Up Youth Nation, a Brockton-based nonprofit group, brought its new anti-bullying campaign to hundreds of enthusiastic students gathered last Monday at Grace F. Cole Elementary School in Norwell.

The group aims to help Greater Brockton children and teens who are dealing with social issues, including bullying, and Monday's event in Norwell debuted a new approach to getting the anti-bullying message out.

Local musician Nick Gentili performed a song titled "Big Ol' Bully" and the audience response made it clear he'd struck a nerve.

"The kids were very enthusiastic," school counselor Patty Hickey said. "They get sick of constantly hearing about it from their guidance counselors, so when a program like this comes in, it really enhances the message."

The importance of getting that message across was reinforced by a study published this month in the journal *Psychology of Violence* that shows children who are bullied often become victims of abuse and harassment later in life.

The University of New Hampshire Crimes Against Children Research Center recently reported that those who had been cyber-bullied were three times more likely to be victims of dating violence than other teens.

Sherry Hamby, who led the survey, surmises that children who are bullied suffer a loss in self esteem that makes them more vulnerable to future violence.

Schools throughout the region have staged events similar to the one last week in Norwell and it's hard not to believe they are making a difference.

One of the painful aspects of bullying is the shame it imparts on the victim. Bringing together hundreds of students reminds every potential victim that they are not alone and certainly have no reason to be ashamed.