

Almonte/Carleton Place EMC

Bullies may be bigger, but they aren't stronger at St. Mary's

Posted Jan 19, 2012 By Desmond Devoy

EMC News - When a firefighter is pulling a little girl around, acting like a bully, something is wrong.

When he's doing it in front of the whole school, something is really, really wrong.

And with the principal and a visiting police officer just standing there. Watching. Doing nothing.

And that is the whole point.

Captain Dave Joy of the Ocean Wave Fire Department is a nice guy, really.

And the little girl asked for it - by that we mean, she volunteered.

On the morning of Wednesday, Jan. 11, in the gym at St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School in Carleton Place, Joy stood at one end of the rope as he pulled her across the floor to the bemusement of everyone.

He was standing in for the prototypical bully, though he is anything but.

But watch how quickly the tables were turned when friends, teachers, and community members joined her on her side of the rope, making for one of the most lopsided tug-of-wars ever.

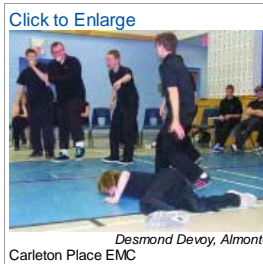
Now it was Joy's turn to get his sorry butt dragged across the gym floor.

"Our rights are very important and nobody should take away our right to feel safe at school," said Constable Steve Stresman of the OPP (Ontario Provincial Police).

"Sometimes it is hard to keep your rights when the bully is bigger or stronger, but nobody should ever take your rights away from you. If you are having trouble with a bully, don't hesitate to seek help and find people who will help you keep your rights." The entire school was getting a crash course in several key concepts such as WITS - Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out, Seek Help, and LEADS - Look and Listen, Explore points of view, Act, Did it work? "We need to help with the problems and stuff," said WITS leader Ethan Ryan, who is in Grade 4 at the school. "(The teachers have) seen us help out on the school yard," he said of why and his two other fellow WITS team members were chosen.

"It's just the right thing to do," said Ryan. "I help solve their problems if they (fellow students) are in a fight." Principal Ralph Sharples said that the exercise was a way to make the students at the school "kinder, gentler people." "Love can have many different fields to it and we are helping people who need help," said Sharples. "It takes all of us ... (we need to) treat each other with respect and that we look out for each other."

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