

Bullying

From Page 1

pal Carey Mitzel. “That is part of the learning curve of growing up. We help them to learn from their mistakes.”

These behaviors can happen anywhere. But most often, they happen where adult supervisors are not close by. When kids follow a system, they also learn how to work around it.

“In the classroom, (teachers) don’t see bullying; it’s just not there,” Dvoracek said. “It is a structured environment and the teachers have that down.”

It is the unsupervised times where a student can be at the most risk for being bullied. This includes outside school, on the weekends or away from wandering eyes.

“We do a great job of supervising the hallways and supervising lunches,” Johnke said. “We have monitors who are out there constantly, even during passing times in the Commons and before school. It is not something that is generally done in front of adults.”

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM

When these situations do

arise, the first goal of supervisors is to establish whether or not it is a one-time incident or an act of bullying.

“If a teacher is observing bullying or has it reported to them, they are the first investigators,” Mitzel said. “We try to have the person who is most connected with the situation investigate initially.”

Once the opening observation has been made, the teacher or supervisor can deal with the circumstance directly or it could come to the office principal or the school counselor. Each is handled differently, with the best interest of the students in mind.

“Anybody can cry wolf at times,” Dvoracek said. “That is why we have to investigate everything.”

“Let’s say a student goes up to a teacher and says ‘so-and-so is calling me names outside,’” Mitzel said. “There might be two sides to the story, which there usually is. It might end with a conversation with both children or it could be bigger than that.”

However the situation is handled, the administrators keep records of situations and tracks patterns that identify behaviors as bullying.

But there are many circumstances that go unseen or unspoken. That is why

these principals stress the importance of having students communicate the problem to adults – when the potential for bullying does happen.

According to a survey by PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center, 64 percent of children who were bullied did not report it.

“We want to help, but we have to know about the situation before we can act on it,” Johnke said. “That is why we need students to report it and to let somebody that they trust within the building know and to know right away.”

This is something school employees try to teach students. It can be hard for kids to communicate with an adult when bullying problems arise. That is why Yankton schools have worked to cultivate a level of trust between administrators and students.

“We all have open-door policies,” Johnke said. “Students are very comfortable coming in to whoever’s office or finding us in the hallways. Just to even chat or talk about the good things going on in their lives.”

Each school also has its own preventative measures that ensure students understand the problems and identify solutions.

“Our teachers have been

trained in bullying prevention,” Mitzel said. “They continue to follow up and have resources on bullying.”

According to PACER, school-based bullying prevention programs decrease bullying by up to 25 percent.

At the elementary level, Beadle School uses the “second step” bullying prevention program. Each aspect of bullying education is divided into a lesson plan that the school guidance counselor or individual class teachers can implement into everyday learning.

At such a young age, the lessons focus on short videos and scenarios that provide realistic situations in which students have to figure out whether or not it is bullying.

“We don’t expect kids to come to school and know how to do those things, especially at the elementary level,” Mitzel said. “If we give them those tools, when they come to the middle school or high school, they’ll have the skills to report those things.”

The middle school brings in speakers and counselors that present discussions on the topic. At this level, students are learning not just about the act of bullying but what it means to be a bystander and how to report it.

The high school is in its third year of Youth Frontier’s “respect and wisdom” retreats. Every spring and fall, representatives from the organization come into the school and address respecting yourself, respecting others and respecting the school’s community.

THE NEW AGE

According to StopBullying.gov, about 28 percent of students in grades 6-12 have been the victim of bullying, while about 20 percent of students in high school have experienced the same issues. This trend shows that bullying does reduce as children get older.

Besides the physical aspect of bullying, administrators have been forced to add another preventative measure into their curriculum.

With the coming-of-age technology, younger generations can find it easier to bully someone via the Internet. This is something Yankton teachers recognize and are prepared to face. Certain steps are in place to make it as difficult as possible for students to use technology as a weapon in bullying.

“Unfortunately, it is very easy to hide behind technology,” Johnke said. “Whether

it’s snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram – all of those sites are blocked within our server.”

Administrators not only making it harder for kids to use technology to bully, but they also make them aware of the outcomes.

At the beginning of the year, class meetings are held and police officers are invited to discuss the topic of annoying or harassing electronic communications.

“We work hard to teach kids how to use the technology the correct way,” Dvoracek said. “We have had law enforcement come in and talk about what happens and some of the consequences of it.”

There are many ways to bully and be bullied. Yankton schools make it a priority to make the students they teach feel safe in a positive learning environment.

“For the most part, I think our students do a pretty good job,” Mitzel said. “Are there students that bully? Yes. We work with them and their parents to try to modify their behaviors. To say that it is a huge issue at a building, I don’t see it that way.”

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Mission

From Page 1

have to go out of the country to help the needy but there are plenty of poor people right here in the United States. Take for instance, Keiter said studies in Fremont show 82 percent of the residents there have a high school education or less.

“We go to people in need and help the elderly, lonely,” Keiter said. “The concept is to serve, it’s our mission and part of our faith whether we are rural or urban.”

The mission statement for the Catholic Heart Work Camp is, “To share the love of Christ as we serve the neglected, brokenhearted and the marginalized in any way needed; equally, to inspire participants to live as disciples of Christ through serving others as a way of life; and to foster the Catholic Faith of each participant through the sacraments, prayer and involvement in social service.”

Each day starts early with mass followed by a bus ride to a work site. The 10 Cedar County participants were split up, each joining a different work group. They were all assigned a work project and had to complete the work in one week. The homes needed paint outside and inside, repairs, cleaning especially in several homes where residents were hoarders, landscaping outside and along the way they spread their faith.

At 3:30 p.m., the work groups were brought to a central location, typically a high school gym where the campers participated in a retreat event with prayers, music videos, talks and skits. At the week’s end they were encouraged to live out the experience of serving when they went home.

The individual work camps are organized by a team of eight to ten college kids who apply for the positions which are similar to internships. Eight teams cover all the sessions throughout the summer and assemble the food, tools and all the supplies for the work sessions.

“I heard Father talk about the mission trip in church one Sunday and thought that sounded interesting,” said Jackson Eickhoff of Fordyce. He convinced his best friend Jason Becker it would be a neat experience.

“We met new people, saw new places; it was a cool experience,” said Becker. “I liked helping people and it opened my eyes – not everyone is as fortunate as we are here.”

When the friends got to the work camp in Wichita, they were split into different work crews and given their jobs. The youth volunteers came from all over the United States and were mixed up into crews so the Cedar County group met people from the four corners and all walks of life.

Eickhoff and Becker found the people they wanted to help to be a little wary of them.

“They weren’t friendly, a little scared of us but when we kept coming back, they warmed up to us,” Eickhoff said.

The work camp provided all the crews with lunches and the people at the work sites offered them water. Some of the residents were churchgoers and the last evening they were invited to attend a pot luck and a night of sharing at the school gym for everyone.

Adult chaperone Jody Paulsen of Menominee was familiar with mission trips. She and her family settled in Nebraska five years ago and belong to St. Joseph parish in

Constance. She grew up as a Methodist and when she was young, her family would go on mission trips every year. The Catholic Heart Work Camp is a much grander scale than the trips she took as a child and now as a convert, she enjoyed the trip and the new memories.

“It was so interesting to watch the Cedar group get all mixed up with kids from all over,” Paulsen said. “They really opened up. It showed in the evenings when they were in the retreat sessions and interacting with other kids.”

As Paulsen drove a suburban of kids to the week-long experience, it was amusing for her to hear the comments on the way down and then the comments on the way home. She usually carpooled some of the kids to and from school events and they were used to talking in her vehicle. At first

they were all apprehensive. They wondered if it would be too much church and they really didn’t know what was going to happen.

“On the way home I was pleasantly surprised to realize there is more faith and church inside these kids than we know,” said Paulsen.

Deacon Rod Wiebelhaus also went as an adult chaperone and had never been on a mission trip. He was very surprised how well the Catholic Heart group organized the work camp.

“I was the head of our crew and I had seven guys from everywhere, didn’t know a one of them,” said Wiebelhaus. “We helped this 78-year-old elderly woman who had lost her son and then had a heart attack. Her house needed painting.” He said she was a little lost and didn’t have much faith but as the

week passed and the kids kept coming back, talking to her, they eventually convinced her to join them for the last evening to share their week and a pot luck meal.

“We were all surprised and, you know, pleased she got up at the pot luck and said how thankful she was for the help...I think we changed her life,” said Wiebelhaus.

Wiebelhaus said each volunteer was in charge of an area like tools, meals, drinks and safety and the organization was great.

“It was hard work; We had to work together to get all the work done,” said Wiebelhaus.

“We had to paint three coats, clean gutters and make minor repairs. It was not simple work and getting everyone on the same page took a day or two. Teamwork was a big part.” The evenings were just

as challenging he said. During the week-long retreat, singing and talks led to some serious personal conversations.

For Keiter, the retreats revive him for his weekly parish responsibilities.

“Part of me hates to leave my parish for those five weeks, and I surely get ideas from parents and students for teaching, but these youth are young at heart and seeing their service gives me new ideas for preaching,” said Keiter. “These kids are so vibrant and full of life; I’m rejuvenated.”

Keiter assembled 20 packets for interested volunteers from the Cedar County area for next year’s session in Knoxville. After Eickhoff and Becker told all their friends what a great time they had, Keiter handed out all the packets.

“I look forward to going

back,” said Becker. “I will be more comfortable and I enjoyed the work and helping others.”

“It was a special time to come closer to Christ,” said Eickhoff.

Paulson works out of the Omaha Archdiocese Office of Evangelization and Catechesis so supporting faith formation is important to her.

“The mission was a beautiful experience; I see the Catholic faith is alive in our young people in Cedar County,” said Paulson. “They have a personal relationship with Christ and faith is on fire in our kids.”

For more information or to check where next summer’s camp locations are, check out the website, <http://heartwork-camp.com/>.

Leadercast  Yankton Chamber

October 15, 2015

The Brave Ones

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Program Lineup

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7:00 a.m. Registration/Breakfast
8:00 a.m. Sessions Begin
11:15 a.m. Lunch

Afternoon Session

12:25 p.m. Sessions Begin
2:00 p.m. Break
2:20 p.m. Sessions Begin
3:30 p.m. Sessions End

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