

Librarian's Shelf by Brad Hruska

"Empowering Children to Stand up to Bullies"

The Columbus Public Library had the privilege of participating in the Columbus Area United Way's "Healthy Families Fun Fest" program. The focus of this program was to promote the importance of mental and physical wellness to individuals of all ages.

Lynn Vollbracht, Director of Immanuel Lutheran Daycare, and I conducted a session on bullying and how children can deal with a classmate who might be trying to emotionally or physically harm them. For this session, I facilitated a discussion based on the book "Bully B.E.A.N.S" by Julia Cook. Cook, an educator and counselor from Fremont, NE, has penned a number of wonderful texts that have helped children deal with numerous social issues like making friends and worrying. A few of her most popular titles are "Wilma Jean the Worry Machine," "My Mouth Is a Volcano!", and "Making Friends Is an Art!".

In "Bully B.E.A.N.S", readers meet a group of students tormented by Bobbette; "a big, bad bully." Bobbette wants to be the boss and tells her peers what to do, where to go, and even what to say. If the other students did not do what Bobbette wants, she threatened to twist them up into human pretzels.

One evening, our narrator decides to finally tell her mom about Bobbette and her crude ways. "Sounds like you have a true-blue bully on your hands," her mom says after listening intently to her child. The narrator's mom then heads to the kitchen cupboard to fetch the "Bully B.E.A.N.S," special candies that give individuals the power to stand up to peers who are being mean. The "B.E.A.N.S" in "Bully B.E.A.N.S." is an acronym for "Bullies Everywhere Are NOW Stopped!"

At school the next day, our narrator tells her friends about the "Bully B.E.A.N.S." and how they can aid them in dealing with Bobbette and her not-nice ways. At recess, when Bobbette goes to harass Winston, the smartest kid in the whole entire school, the group pops some of the "Bully B.E.A.N.S." in their mouths and then find the inner-strength to tell Bobbette to "Back Off!" and leave them alone. Standing up to Bobbette takes her bullying power away and Bobbette stops picking on the group.

I've read other bullying texts in recent years; however, I have found this book to be one of the best. Not only does it allow children to feel empowered when dealing with bullies, but it also equips them with applicable tools to handle such situations.

If you would like more information on "Bully B.E.A.N.S" by Julia Cook or recommendations for other great books that deal with bullying, feel free to contact me at (402) 564-7116 opt. 4.

And parents remember...we can empower our children to stand up to bullies and we CAN be there to guide them and love them during this difficult season of life. Just by letting our children know that they are loved by us can make all the difference.