

Students learn from anti-bullying film they made

By Jodi Heckel

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CHAMPAIGN - An anti-bullying film made at Franklin Middle School and screened at the Virginia Theatre on Friday night has already made a difference for some of the students involved in making it.

When the students talked about what bullying was during the making of the film, "I realized I had done half these things," said McKenzie Bonnett. "It made me understand I had to check myself. It was a part of growing up I hadn't done yet."

Roniesha McClure admits to doing "the usual girl stuff" - spreading gossip and being mean to other students she didn't particularly care for. She is trying to change her behavior.

She's not the only one. A number of the 28 eighth-grade students who made the film said they had bullied another student, and many others said they had been bullied.

The film is one of two anti-bullying films made in the U.S. by Australian filmmaker Chris Faull. Called "Stories of Us," they are part of a program called Promoting Positive Peer Relationships. The films and supporting curriculum materials will be available to schools across the country to help teachers have in-depth discussions with students about bullying.

The Franklin students made the film last fall. The final version was shown to a nearly full house at the Virginia Theatre.

Carolyn Muller said adults need to pay more attention to what's going on with students, from noticing changes in their behavior to questioning what's behind incidents in the classroom.

The students said making the film took hard work and long hours.

"We really got tired because we did take after take after take after take," Yashica Pettigrew said.

"Then we find out (Faull) used the first take."

But they say it was worth all the work. Carolyn said working on the film was one of the most important things she's done, and it helped her get to know her classmates.

"We have spent an enormous amount of time with each other," she said.

"We've laughed at jokes other people probably wouldn't understand. We've learned things that we never would have learned otherwise.

"We don't all sit at the same lunch table, and there are certain separations" between us, she continued. But during the film, they became a family.

"In 20 years, we'll be able to look back and remember the people who made such a difference to us in our eighth-grade year."

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http://www.news-gazette.com/news/2008/03/29/eyeopening_production

Comments



John Dixon photos

Franklin Middle School students wave and clap after their question-and-answer session Friday at the premiere of 'Stories of Us' at the Virginia Theatre in Champaign. The movie, which depicts adolescent bullying, was filmed at Franklin Middle School in Champaign.