

Letter to the Editor

YWCA provides guidance and support to teen mothers

During my time at the YWCA as a North Carolina LiteracyCorps/AmeriCorps member, I have seen firsthand the impact that their family literacy program has on its participants. Volunteers and interns from colleges all over the Triad, including UNCG, Guilford and NC A&T, come weekly to mentor teen moms, help them with their homework and provide care for their children. Through this program called Teen Families Reading Together, the YWCA and its volunteers help moms stay in or reconnect with school and encourage them to get their GEDs or high school diplomas, or apply for college.

But more than just meeting these mothers' educational needs, TFRT shows these moms that they are their children's first and best teachers. It enhances their parenting skills and promotes playing with and reading to their children. Confidence is built as they see their children succeed, knowing that their interactions are helping shape their children's futures.

TFRT teaches moms that they can advocate for their children and assist them in reaching their goals. And, as they see the positive impact they can have on their children's lives, it inspires them to strive towards their own ambitions. Family literacy programs are essential in our community as they supply support to help young moms succeed in school and prepare their children for success as well.

Programs like the one provided by the YWCA offer encouragement and guidance that are essential for empowering these families.

Katie Chapman, Greensboro resident

Bullying: it's more than just taunts



By Haejin Song
STAFF WRITER

When in grade school, kids will fight over the silliest and smallest things: fighting over a blue crayon, arguing over who can run faster or who gets to be little Johnny's girlfriend for the day. Yet, even young children know that it's not right to call each other names. Even at that age, words hurt.

But what happens when you're a bit older, and tattling to the teacher won't do the job? What do you do when the taunts aren't, "Hey, four-eyes!" but, "You're a slut and no one likes you. Why don't you just die?"

Unfortunately, horrid taunts like these are nearly inescapable. The bullies take it a step further — going onto the Internet, typing a few things and then clicking send. It's officially posted on the World Wide Web, and vile comments and messages flood the victim's Facebook page.

This was what happened to one student, Phoebe Prince, who was only 15 years old when she took her own life.

According to The Boston Globe, Phoebe was the new girl at school who had moved with her family from Ireland to South Hadley, Massachusetts. She was a freshman, but briefly dated a popular senior football player. That's when everything went wrong.

Phoebe became the victim of constant bullying, an endless turmoil on a daily basis for three consecutive months. Several of her older classmates relentlessly followed her around, calling her an Irish slut. The senior boyfriend she had once dated turned his back on her and enjoyed the harassment of Phoebe, even encouraging it.

When Phoebe was walking home from school one day, the bullies threw an energy drink at her and screamed, "Why don't you just kill yourself?" reported the Today Show.

Shortly afterwards, Phoebe Prince did just that. She hanged herself with a scarf and took her life on Jan. 14, 2010.

After hearing her story and what the bullies did to her, it's hard not to feel physically and emotionally drained, not to mention disgusted.

Take a moment to step into Phoebe's shoes. You're on

your way to class when a gang of the "cool kids" harass and taunt you. You check your Facebook only to find notifications and messages calling you a "whore" and other unsavory adjectives. You're the victim of physical, verbal and cyber-bullying, and you seem to be cornered at every turn.

The sadder reality is that Phoebe's tragic life story is one of thousands. Her story is only one life amidst the many who commit suicide due to bullying. Her story is the consequence of a severe problem that hasn't been subdued.

Tragedies such as Phoebe's are not merely reminding us of the problem. They are telling us to do something — to take action, to stand up against the teen epidemic of bullying.

"I have to say, with big ears and the name that I have, I wasn't immune (to bullying)," said President Barack Obama at the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention. "We've said, 'Kids will be kids.' And sometimes we overlook the real damage that bullying can do, especially when young people face harassment day after day, week after week."

As the problem continues to grow, many notable public figures have disclosed their own personal stories of being bullied. When all hope seemed lost, the underdogs have gained powerful allies who know exactly what they've been through.

"When I was in middle school and high school, a bully would tell me ways to kill myself every day," said actress Brittany Snow, reported BettyConfidential. "Then, on top of all that, one of my good friends committed suicide because of this bully."

Eminem, one of the best-selling rap artists in the past decade, spoke to Anderson Cooper of 60 Minutes about his experiences with bullying.

"[I got] beat up in the bathroom, beat up in the hallways, shoved in the locker," said Eminem.

He added, "This kid over here, he may have more chicks or he may have better clothes or whatever, but he can't do this like me. He can't write what I'm writing right now."

Although public messages from Brittany Snow and Eminem certainly help, it's not only celebrities that can fight bullying. It's really anyone's responsibility to stand up for victims of bullying, anytime and everywhere.

If a couple of students had stood up against the Phoebe's bullies, who knows if she would still be alive today?

While Phoebe may be gone, her story remains. Her life story, along with many others, needs to be heard. Bullies need to put down their weapons, and everyone needs to understand that words hurt a lot.

