

# No More Bullying!

## A Tragic Loss & One Father's Campaign



*In Memory Of  
Kelly O'Loughlin*



Nancy  
Hufnagel



**K**indness Makes Miracles is a program to help stop bullying by promoting acts of kindness. It is a creative way to encourage middle school students in Helena to express their thoughts on how kindness can make a difference in the world by video/multi-media, song, poetry, and artwork. This program begins every January 1st and ends February 14th. There are no winners, but names of each entry go into a random drawing and prizes are awarded in each category.

This program is sponsored by the Helena Council and was started by Carl O'Loughlin in 2009, to honor the memory of his daughter, Kelly, who was a victim of bullying and who later died in a car accident. He is a member of the *Knights of Columbus* and together with a

fellow member, Marty Beatty, came up with the idea.

Carl wants kids to start being nice to each other, and when they see a fellow student being bullied to stand up for them. He and his wife, Gail, had the heart-breaking ordeal of watching their daughter being bullied. He said it was a horribly helpless feeling.

Kelly, a pretty, kind, and bubbly teenager, was a ballerina and a junior-varsity cheerleader. In her sophomore year, she became the target of a vicious bullying campaign that circulated via the Internet, text messaging, as well as verbal abuse in the Helena High halls. It started when her best friend since kindergarten decided Kelly was no longer good enough for her "in crowd." When she abandoned her she took her other friends with her. There were so many times when Kelly cried in her

mother's arms asking, "Why me? Why?" Then there were the times when she would call her mother and ask her to pick her up for lunch because she felt ostracized by her classmates.

When the O'Loughlins confronted school administrators to do something about the situation, it only made things worse. A small group of offenders were called into the Assistant Principal's office and were given a talk about being "nice." Since there were no consequences, the abuse and harassment escalated because she got her parents involved. The last straw for Kelly was when she tried out for varsity cheerleader and didn't make the squad. After reaching a point of desperation, she and a friend sneaked out of the house in the middle of the night, only one night after not being chosen for varsity cheerleader. They ended up in a car with a couple of boys from Butte. The young driver who have been drinking and speeding caused a collision that proved to be fatal for Kelly.

Kelly died immediately from her injuries in the early morning hours of April 27th, 2008. That awful day haunts the family daily because it never should have happened. This kind of erratic behavior was out of character for Kelly. These were not the kind of boys that she would normally hang out with.

Carl has given TV interviews and has spoken at school assemblies. His message to students is

that there were a handful of kids that made Kelly's life miserable everyday and yet there were many more good kids that stood by and did nothing. Only after her death did countless young people come forward and say how much they cared for Kelly. Perhaps, if they had stood up for her and were willing to be her friend, the miracle of kindness would have saved her life and she would be with us

and last state with anti-bullying legislation as there needs to be clearly defined consequences for the offenders and laws that would make examples of them. Anti-bullying legislation was proposed during both the 2011 and 2013 sessions and got shot down both times. Carl and Gail testified in 2011 and said it was emotionally draining for them, something they would

probably never do again because it fell on deaf ears.



today. Sadly, Kelly died believing she had only one real friend at Helena High. When Carl tells this story at presentations, you could hear a pin drop and he could see teachers and some students getting emotional. Both parents and teachers have shown very positive reactions to the *Kindness Makes Miracles* program.

### ANTI-BULLYING LEGISLATION

Carl and Gail would like to see Montana become the 50th

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On February 18, 19 and 20 of this year, the Helena NBC station ran a three-part series on bullying and they interviewed State Representative Jenny Eck about Montana being the ONLY state without anti-bullying legislation. She commented that the opponents saw bullying as just something kids needed to deal with as part of the maturity process!(?)

Clearly, these people are out of touch with the reality of bullying today. Social media has given

## *She Is a Stranger to Light*

She is a stranger to light,  
She lives in the dark.  
She fights with all her might,  
But she still has the mark.

If kids could only see the pain,  
The pain she hides every day,  
It starts with tears and turns to strain,  
This is the price she has to pay.

She cries silently in the rain,  
So no one can see the tears,  
While they all live in vain,  
And pretend not to hear.

One more day of sorrow,  
One more day of regret.  
And she may not see tomorrow,  
She is her very own threat.

She is not alone in the shadows,  
Others are in here,  
Even as their eyes glow,  
They will still live in fear.

But on one fateful day,  
When they were surrounding,  
She had nothing to say,  
She felt like she was drowning.

It was when she stepped in,  
This girl of pink of hair,  
This girl of tattooed skin,  
She knew how to scare.

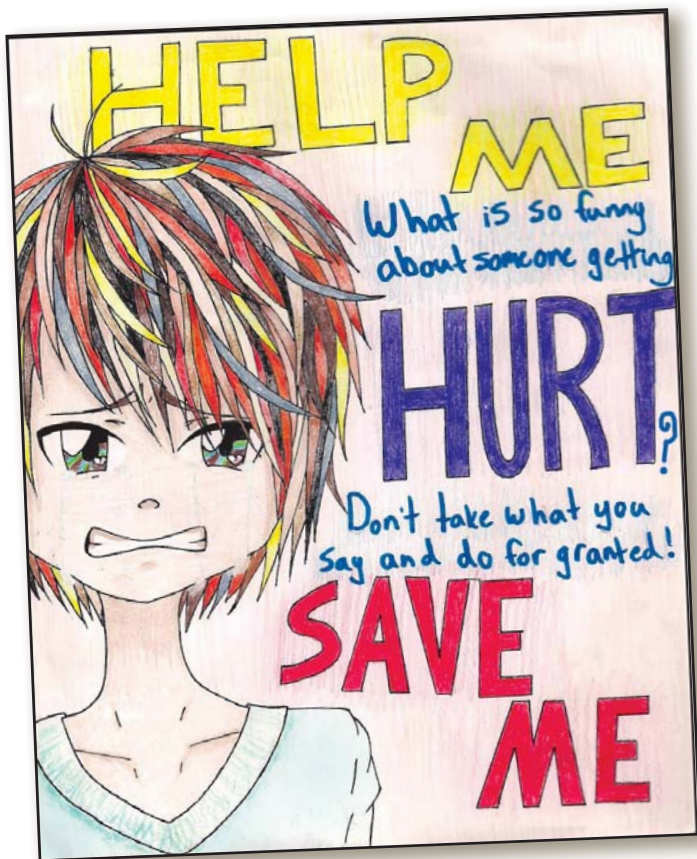
She had faced all the demons,  
The heartless and the cruel,  
They were no longer beaming,  
They all looked like fools.

It was when she took my hand,  
And told me it would be alright,  
The day I knew I would stand  
And I held on extremely tight.

And from there on out,  
I did not live in darkness,  
I did not live in light,  
But I lived in a word,

Where everything was alright.

—Reagan Wood



kids an avenue to spread vicious lies and to ruin reputations rapidly because what is posted online can be seen by thousands! And many that attack via the Internet, texting, or twitter would not have the courage to say such nasty remarks to the victim's face. The glorification of bullying on reality shows and the violence in the movies and on TV are also contributing factors to aggressive behavior.

### TOWARD A MORE TOLERANT SOCIETY

While there is a need for anti-bullying legislation, there is a greater need for programs that build self-esteem. Bullies also need help as they are often insecure individuals who need to tear down others to build themselves up. Bullies have often been bullied themselves and are simply acting out how they have

been treated. Carl and Gail have turned their tragic loss into positive action by promoting awareness, acceptance, and compassion.

And these are qualities that Kelly possessed. She was a champion for the underdog. She would never pass a homeless

person without asking her parents to give the person some money. In spite of all that she had experienced, she put up a little banner on the ceiling of her car that simply said, "Love," and it was still there the day she died. Carl uses her car every day and it remains right where she left it. *Kindness Makes Miracles* is Kelly's legacy. ■

## Her Harsh End

She approached you with a smile on her face, But you were all in denial. She felt like she was falling and she had hit the ground, So she moved on to a new group of "friends," Whose eyes were always filled with haze. They helped her find a drink that eased the pain. So one day, they decided to have a little on the way. As they rode down the dusty old road, The drink made them feel free and floaty. So they continued to drive in the muffled phase. They turned too fast and... CRASH!!! They crashed into that large old oak tree. All the hate and pain tore her down. You pushed her away into the wrong crowd. So now whose fault was it? Was it her fault? Maybe. Was it their fault? Possibly. Or was it your fault? One thing's for sure... The world will never know.

—Keely LaHara

**You can help** get anti-bullying laws established in Montana—the 50th and final state to do so! Sign the petition started by **Sheridan Pope, 2013's Miss Montana**. Go to **CHANGE.ORG** and search for: "CREATE ANTI-BULLYING LAWS IN MONTANA."

Visit **Facebook: Supporters of Montana's Anti-Bullying Laws**

For a **Bully-Free Montana Tool Kit**, go to: **[opi.mt.gov/bullyfree](http://opi.mt.gov/bullyfree)**

Gratitude to the two fellow students of Kelly O'Loughlin who submitted the poems included here in conjunction with the **Kindness Makes Miracles** campaign.

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