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Fallsburg, NY 12733**

Super Heroes Rock at Fallsburg Central School District

Sweethearts & Heroes presented their anti-bullying program to over a million school children during the past eight years. Thanks to the generosity of Phil Vallone and Rolling V Bus Company, FCSD received the full presentation. After two full school days and one evening on February 8 and 9, 2018 at the Fallsburg High School Auditorium, students, teachers and parents cheered presenters Tom Murphy and Rick Yarosh. Tom was a champion on the Mixed Martial Arts circuit. Rick was an Army Sergeant and Wounded Warrior in Iraq.

Tom says bullying is mean and scary behavior done over and over again against smaller and weaker people. In the 1500's bully meant "sweetheart" or serving to make someone a better person. In less than a century, it took on the modern meaning; and now America suffers from a bullying epidemic. Murphy and Yarosh's powerful program demonstrates what schools and communities can do to eradicate the behavior.

In an hour on Friday morning the presenters mesmerized 10th through 12th graders just as they did at a Parent Forum the evening before. Murphy describes the impact of bullying on peer groups, and he offers positive ways to confront the behavior of bullies and to empower bystanders. His approach is the **Five Bully Buttons: #1 Perspective; #2 H.O.P.E.; #3 Sweethearts; #4 Jump into Action; and #5 Heroes.**

#1 Perspective

Bullies are created, not born. Social alienation and isolation creates bullying—indirect, physical, verbal and cyber. 58% of Americans believe kids **deserve to be bullied!** Bullies get away with their behavior 96% of the time. Every school day 170,000 kids are "sick" with no statistics about how many are afraid at school. Eighty percent of bullying happens in front of bystanders. Most dramatically, intones Murphy, "A half million to one million young people will consider suicide this year. The main reason is hopelessness. Why have 10 to 14 year olds reached this level of despair and what can we do?"

#2 H.O.P.E. Hold on, Possibilities Exist

Rick Yarosh shares his story. In 2006, his tank in Iraq ran over an IED. The explosion set Rick and two mates ablaze in fuel. His body on fire, he exits the tank, jumps to the ground, drops and rolls. The fire continues. He feels so hopeless for a moment that he sees his life ending. Hope suddenly returns, he rolls again and gets to a canal with some water, and the fire goes out. Two soldiers pulled Rick away. After air-lifting, he endured many months of severe burn treatment and rehabilitation. Today he has a prosthetic lower leg from the jump out of the tank. He lost his ears, part of his nose, and his face and body are a mass of scar tissue. He has vision, hearing and sense of smell, and he is grateful to be alive.

Ventures out in public were an ordeal. In a restaurant a five year old girl saw Rick and asked her grandfather about him. He suggested she go say hello to him. She walked towards Rick, and he said, "Hey." She hurried back to her grandfather and said, "He's

really nice.” Three words changed Rick’s life forever. He told the audience, “**You may not recognize it yet, but you possess the H.O.P.E. that many seek. You can save or change a life. You can create an environment of hope. Hold on, possibilities exist.**”

#3 Sweethearts, #4 Jump into Action, and #5 Heroes

Like a 16th century Sweetheart that girl awakened Rick’s innate hopefulness. Sweethearts in our lives push us to be better. Rick and Tom acknowledge that they were here because Sweethearts mentored them.

Next, Murphy engages students in role playing to reveal their inner Sweethearts, how to jump into action, and how to transform into Heroes. Two volunteers from the students act as the bully victim and bystander in the **A.B.C.** exercise. Tom is the bully, wearing his black hat with horns.

In scene A as in **Away**, the bystander wearing a cape and mask, interrupts the bullying, takes the victim by the hand and simply walks away with him. Scene B as in **Becoming a Buddy**, has the bystander move up to victim and engage him in what they will do together. Finally in Scene C as in **Call for Help**, the bystander summons immediate help to intervene and end the bullying. Bully Drills like this can be done as easily as Fire Drills in the school.

Students are empowered to take a stand—not just stand by! Here Murphy quotes Albert Einstein: “The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don’t do anything about it.” Murphy looks intently at the faces of the children and says: “You are willing to do what others are not willing to do. Kids are going to solve the problems of other kids. You are the true Sweethearts and Heroes.”

This program can and does change the climate in a school building. Ask those from the Fallsburg community that witnessed Tom Murphy and Rick Yarosh. To see videos and more information about the organization, visit www.sweetheartsandheroes.com.

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