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Stop a bully now, save a life later

Young students learning to take a stand

By KEVIN CRUSH, SUN MEDIA

Stopping bullies in school may prevent deadly crimes later in life, say junior high students.

After a ceremony honouring students for random acts of kindness at Dan Knott junior high school yesterday, student organizers of the Stop Bullying Fight Violence effort at the school say they hope they can help prevent those kinds of crimes from ever happening.

"People don't start out wanting to hurt somebody or kill somebody, it will start out as a little thing like pushing somebody in the hall or making fun of somebody or calling them names and it will slowly escalate," said Grade 8 student Marissa Gilson.

Fellow organizer Amanda Purcha, also in Grade 8, said getting to kids early prevents crime.

"I think they might have gotten into the wrong group but because of Fight Violence it may lead them away from it and they'll go into the good group and stand up to bullies."

Last Wednesday, Hans Alberts, 77, was stabbed to death in an apparent random attack near Stony Plain Road.

Haldane Jensen-Huot, 23, was arrested in Regina Friday and has been charged with second-degree murder.

On April 12, Alan Cumming, 38, was stabbed to death outside his northside apartment. No one has been arrested.

On Sunday, Cory Cockle, 25, was found dead outside a Mill Woods home from stab wounds. The killing is believed to have been drug-related.

The kids are probably right when it comes to preventing these crimes, said the school's resource officer Const. Alexa Simpson.

"I think that bullying and violent behaviours tend to start early on in their years of education so if we can get them to have that (non-violent) mindset early on then hopefully it would be preventive and stop them from acting out in a violent way in the future."

Edmonton Eskimos right tackle Patrick Kabongo spoke to the students at Dan Knott and told them it was up to them to make the right decisions. Having grown up in one of the roughest neighbourhoods in Montreal, he said bullying and violence led too many of his classmates down the wrong path.

"Now I look and all my friends are not where they want to be. I was blessed. I had good parents. I had people to look after me."