

# JOE THE BIKER

Respect & protect as part of a community.

Long before mandates against bullying came down from the New Hampshire legislature, New Boston Central School has hosted many programs over the years to help students overcome bullying and to provide help for the bully.

On October 21st, I attended a program for the 4th, 5th and 6th graders. Principal Rick Matthews greeted the audience seated on the floor in the gym, letting them know there was a special guest who would talk to them about bullying.

The sounds of a big Harley motorcycle filled the air and from out of the shadows came a very tough-looking man. Clad in motorcycle leathers, a skullcap and wraparound shades, the man with the long handlebar mustache had the kids attention in an instant.

"Don't judge me by the way I look, judge me by what I say and how I act," he said, removing the leather jacket to reveal arms decorated with lots of colorful tattoos.

This was Joe Wojcik, a.k.a. Joe the Biker, who was bullied and called "Yubbie" as a chubby kid.

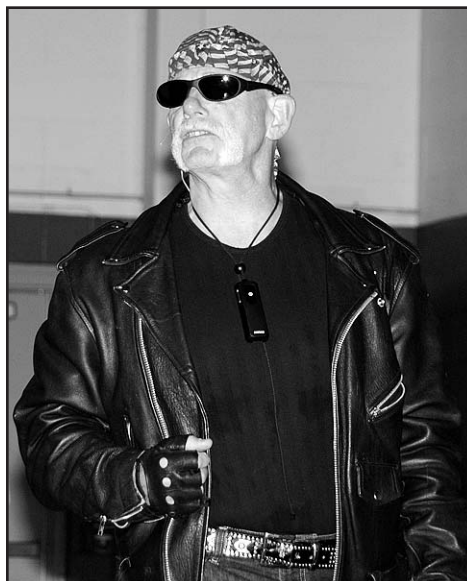
"I'm 60 years old and I still remember the pain of being bullied," shared this tough biker.

Joe grew up in a generation that completely ignored the bullying actions between kids. Back then, adults told children things like "stick up for yourself," "don't be a cry baby," and "names will never hurt you."

It has taken a lot of years, but we are finally realizing the damage done by that advice. Programs like those presented by Joe the Biker bring a caring reality to the suffering of children who are being bullied—and give them tools to productively change their fate.

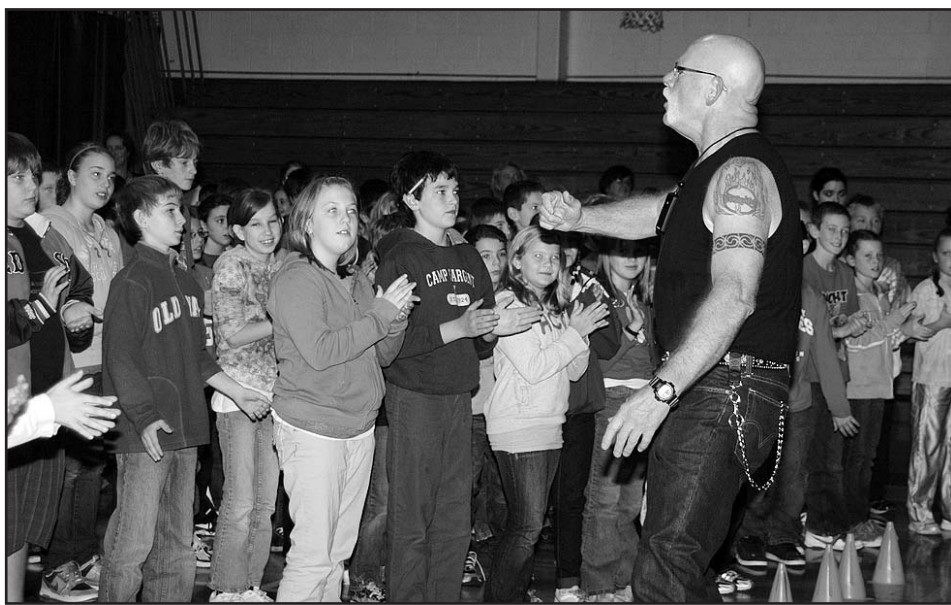
Adults, especially those at schools, have become the safe place where children can turn to report bullying—and have something done about it.

Drawing on his own experiences, Joe the Biker addressed bullying and its long-term effects. After being relentlessly bullied as a child, he spent his



BRANDY MITROFF PHOTOS

Joe the Biker was called Yubbie and bullied as a kid. He grew up to become a bully before a life-changing event put him on the path of caring deeply about the welfare of children.

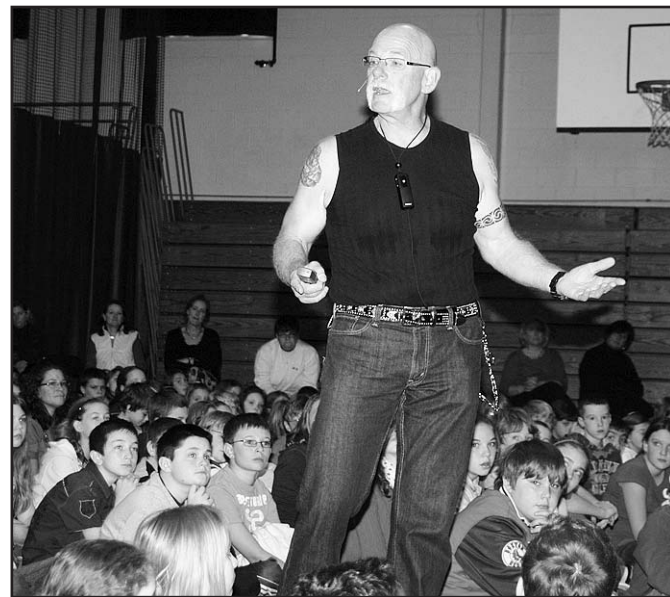


20s as a drug abuser and bully.

"I was a very mean person for a long time. I had a lot of anger," he admitted.

But a debilitating car accident in his early 30s became a life-altering experience. Joe persevered through a 17-year healing process that included a physical, psychological and spiritual transformation.

Joe and his wife have been foster parents to more than 100 teens and he has dedicated himself to the



welfare of young people. He took his childhood name and created the Yubbie Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to his cause.

Joe addressed the clear difference between "tattling" and "reporting." Tattling is when you're deliberately trying to get someone else in trouble over something unimportant. On the other hand, reporting is an attempt to protect yourself or someone else from a bully.

"Why do some bully others?" asked Joe. "Something happened that made them feel inadequate, they don't feel good about themselves.

The bully has the problem, not you," he stressed.

He told the kids that a bully is looking for someone weaker, so develop friendships and stick up for each other.

Using the letters of YUBBIE, he created a Put a Stop to Bullying Pledge that he taught the kids:

- You have to stand up and tell.
- Unite as a community.
- Be understanding.
- Be aware.
- Intervene when someone is being bullied.
- Express your own talent.

Joe the Biker also presented a special program for the younger students as well as one in the evening for both staff and parents.

—Brandy Mitroff

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