

October 2012

Since my last article, I've seen the best and worst education has to offer. Let me start with the best, which is the Guthrie homecoming. Words can't describe the loyalty exhibited at the Friday morning alumni assembly. This is yet another item our community should find as a source of pride. Homecoming is much more than a football game; it is a renewal of community spirit from those that went before us. I was particularly moved by the video tribute to the class of 1962 that incorporated a link from many events of the day including the promise of the "New Frontier" based on President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address.

The worst education has to offer happened last week in my hometown of Stillwater. Tragedy struck education as an 8th grade student in Stillwater took his own life in the presence of his classmates. Many in the media quickly speculated that bullying was the cause of this action. The student's parents quickly rebuked the claims noting their son's bout with depression. Regardless of the reasons for a tragedy such as this, we are reminded to watch carefully any changes in those we are close to.

I have often taken controversial topics head-on as I will the next topic—bullying. Does it occur in Guthrie Schools—probably so, just as in every school district in Oklahoma. The key to stopping any unwanted behavior is setting parameters and being consistent in reinforcing what is acceptable. Students must believe that adults will not condone this behavior. This is why the hallmark approach to bullying is to be an interested listener as an adult authority figure. Often, bullying with children is reinforced by the inaction of adults. When adults do nothing, we are giving unwritten permission for the action. Ultimately, the behavior cannot be changed without the authority figure knowing it is occurring. That is why we must listen to our children including those who bully others. Have you noticed that I used adult instead of teacher or principal in the strategies? This is not only a school problem but also a societal problem. If ever the term "it takes a village to raise a child" were appropriate, it would be with this topic.

In the aftermath of last week's tragedy, the media and others quickly jumped to the conclusion that bullying must have occurred. While this assertion was incorrect, it happens because of what we know has gone on in the past with children. The road to a solution for this problem doesn't lie in the "blame game" but rather in all adults accepting responsibility for the children in our "village". A website with many suggestions is www.stopbullying.gov . If you have a child or grandchild that you talk to, encourage them to communicate with adults they trust about things going on in their lives. This is the first step of many on the road to raising children.

I hope you were able to see our students perform either on the football or softball fields or the recent vocal concert. We should be very proud of the students and their many talents which represent our community admirably. For upcoming events,

please go to the district website at www.guthrie.k12.ok.us and I hope to see you there.