

Move it forward

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The Scary Guy hasn't wasted any time getting to work in Austin.

He's spent the past two days giving six presentations at Austin High School for students, and he held a community event to give an overview of his message Tuesday evening.

He has had lunch with student leaders, posed for pictures and embraced in hugs. All in the name of his mission toward "the total elimination of hate, violence and prejudice worldwide." He is just getting started; he'll be in town until Nov. 11.

"It's good to be in Austin, Minn.," The Scary Guy said. "It's been a long time coming."

"I just love it here so far."

The Community Against Bullying group brought The Scary Guy to Austin to share his anti-bullying message.

The Scary Guy will share two phases of his curriculum involving awareness and understanding. The second phase of the presentation to high school students deals with the process of making choices about what someone sees and hears.

It's not about what comes out of someone else's mouth that's important, it's what you choose to do with what you hear — that's the solution, The Scary Guy said.

He also asks three questions of his audience, including adults at the public event, with a response by a show of raised hands: How many people have been called rotten, negative names? How many people have called other people rotten, negative names? How many people have physically struck another human being (including your siblings when you were little kids)?

Most hands were up for all three questions. The Scary Guy said he sees bullying wherever he goes.

"This is not a kid problem," The Scary Guy said. "This is a human epidemic."

The way Community Against Bullying and the community of Austin have supported bringing him in to help bring about change is "really unique," The Scary Guy said.

"Never in my life in the last 13 years as I travel around the world have I ever seen so many people in one community, one city, pull together as one community to make a difference, at one time," The Scary Guy said. "I have never seen that. You're the first city on the planet to pull it together like this."

That statement drew instant applause from the large crowd gathered in AHS' Knowlton Auditorium Tuesday evening.

Mayor Tom Stiehm presented a proclamation during the evening program, with words of support for the anti-bullying group and proclaiming Oct. 31-Nov. 11 as Anti-Bullying Awareness Week. Stiehm said during his time as an investigator with the Austin Police Department, his worst cases were always about bullying.

"There was no resolution," Stiehm said. "I never solved anything."

The Scary Guy said he can't change people, but he can give them information and share his research from around the world. He will be in Austin schools during the next two weeks. Both he and Community Against Bullying chairwoman Danielle Borgerson-Nesvold invited the community to presentations at the schools, so long as visitors remember to check in at the main office first.

The Scary Guy also said that people could say he's kind of a comedian with a serious message. He's here to tell people how they can change their lives. There are not a lot of solution-based programs out there, but The Scary Guy breaks it down to make everything as simplistic as possible.

"This isn't about me," The Scary Guy said. "This is your city. This is an Austin program. You're going to have to take what I give you and you're going to have to move it forward.

"You are going to become a standard for this kind of event."