

Anti-bullying group takes leap forward

Heather Rule
hrule@postbulletin.com

The Community Against Bullying group in Austin took a giant leap toward its goal of raising \$20,000 with its Take It To the Streets event last week.

The group raised about \$6,000, which will be earmarked toward its \$20,000 goal in order to bring the internationally known motivational speaker and Minnesota native The Scary Guy to Austin this fall. C.A.B. had volunteers on street corners near Austin High School and Riverland Community College in Austin last Friday, wearing signs and holding out buckets for donations.

The group received a matching grant of \$2,500 from the home office of Modern Woodmen of America. They also had a total of about 100 pounds of change donated from the community. Along with the donations, the group also sold about 60 T-shirts with the C.A.B. logo; \$4 from every \$8 shirt goes to the group.

"It went really well," said Danielle Borgerson-Nesvold, the group's chairwoman. "We not only raised money, but we raised awareness."

Along with taking donations, the 25-30 volunteers also collected stories from community members who said that they or their children had been bullied. The stories they heard put more motivation into the group members, Borgerson-Nesvold said, because "to see the pain in their eyes, it really touched a lot of people."

The group got a lot of volunteer help from kids as well.

"Our best volunteers were the kids," Borgerson-Nesvold said. "We didn't expect them to be shouting and whooping up the crowd."

"They naturally became the spokespeople for it."

Borgerson-Nesvold said that a common question from people has to do with the \$20,000 goal and how that is a lot of money for a motivational speaker. She counters that question by saying that it costs a school district between \$20,000 and \$40,000 to deal with one kid who's been bullying others. The price of schooling one child is about \$8,000 she said.

So, \$20,000 is really not that much when you compare it to saving people's lives, Borgerson-Nesvold said.

"That's why we're bringing this guy in, because he can connect," she said. "It's going to be a valuable tool."

The Anderson Cooper 360 news program, which had contacted Borgerson-Nesvold with interest in coming to cover the fundraiser, was not in Austin for the event. But they emailed her and wanted to see photos. AC360 is coming Sept. 23 for a C.A.B. event prior to the Austin High School homecoming football game, Borgerson-Nesvold said.

Details regarding additional C.A.B. fundraisers haven't been worked out yet. The group is still waiting to hear on some grants, Borgerson-Nesvold said.

She's just grateful to the city of Austin for coming through during Take It To the Streets.

"We're very humbled and honored that they were very generous to us," she said.