

# St. Ambrose Catholic School Participates in Worldwide March Against Bullying

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Alton/Godfrey, IL – St. Ambrose Catholic School in Godfrey, along with East Elementary in Alton, will join schools around the world in the "March Against Bullying" on May 1, 2014.



St. Ambrose Catholic School has consistently been on the forefront of bullying prevention efforts, including implementing the nationally recognized Olweus Bullying Prevention Program the past three years. The school has an active bullying prevention committee made up of teachers, parents and community members, with a specific focus on character education programs.

As part of St. Ambrose's commitment to bullying prevention and awareness, students are celebrating the worldwide March Against Bullying on May 1, with the theme, "Show Your Character!" A kick off rally will begin at 7:50 am in the school gymnasium, with students wearing school spirit t-shirts, and reciting cheers and chants, followed immediately by a march around the parking lot (or gymnasium, in case of rain) in support of bullying prevention. Godfrey Mayor Mike McCormick has proclaimed May 1 as "March Against Bullying Day in Godfrey, IL." Alton Square Mall is currently showcasing a display of student-designed posters featuring anti-bullying messages, in the upper level near the food court. The celebration will continue after lunch with an old-fashioned "School Social" of games and snacks for all students.

East Elementary's commitment to bullying prevention and awareness includes a full week of activities dedicated to bullying prevention. Students will learn and practice the Stop-Walk-Talk tool, part of the Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies Bullying Prevention program. Students, teachers and staff will also participate in the ceremonial march against bullying on May 1, at 9am.

All schools deal with the issue of bullying. St. Ambrose Catholic School is taking proactive steps to stop and prevent bullying by adopting the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. This research-based schoolwide "systems change" program has been used successfully in schools all over the country and around the world with positive results. St. Ambrose received a grant from Alton Memorial Hospital for the program, and through a partnership with BJC Community Outreach, teachers and volunteer committee members (parents, teachers, community members and parish members) have received extensive training. St. Ambrose added additional faith-based components and customized the program, which they titled DUO (Do Unto Others): Take Courage – Be Bully Free! Students complete surveys every Spring that help determine strengths and areas of improvement needed.

This program is not a curriculum that students participate in for only a few weeks. It's a coordinated effort by all the adults in the school to supervise and intervene when any bullying happens. St. Ambrose added components to build social skills and character, and empower students. As part of the program, students participate in weekly class meetings that focus on building friendships and community, as well as the effects of bullying, what students can do about it, and how they can work with adults to put a stop to it even as bystanders. Sue Schmidt, Principal of St. Ambrose said, "This program is about the whole school climate, fostering respect and friendships. Our goal is to educate the whole child – academics as well as social-emotional skills. This program is very comprehensive and includes components for the school level, classroom level, individual level and community level."

