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# Federal Glover: Contra Costa Youth Summit takes on bullying

By Federal Glover  
For the Contra Costa Times  
Posted: 03/07/2012 02:23:40 PM PST  
Updated: 03/07/2012 02:23:41 PM PST

Stefani was an outcast, a frail-looking girl in high school. After meeting up with some friends at a local pizzeria, Stefani found herself helpless and at the hands of her adolescent bullies.

"The boys picked me up and threw me in the trash can on the street, on the corner of my block while all the other girls from the school were leaving and could see me in the trash."

She remembers fighting back tears because she did not want her tormentors to get any satisfaction from bullying her.

"Everybody was laughing and I was even laughing. I had that nervous giggle -- heh, heh. I remember even one of the girls looking at me like 'are you about to cry? You're pathetic.' That's what it felt like, you're pathetic."

She was so embarrassed she didn't tell anyone about the incident, not even her parents.

As she recalls the incident, sitting in a dark studio by herself: "It didn't sink in with me how bullying affected me until later in my life. I knew that it affected me deeply but it wasn't until a little bit later that I realized how much it affect me and how much it was still very present."

She finally told her story -- through her music. Stefani Germanotta became pop artist Lady Gaga. To hear Lady Gaga tell her story how she was bullied, link to [www.popeater.com/2011/05/20/lady-gaga-mtv-bullies-interview](http://www.popeater.com/2011/05/20/lady-gaga-mtv-bullies-interview).

## Bullying really creates two

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victims. The obvious one is the person being picked on. The other victim is the bully himself, or herself.

"There's all this focus on the victims but victims and bullies are on the same playing field," Gaga recently told an audience. "They both need our help. So how do we not just save the victim but save the bully too?"

Bullying can take the form of physical abuse or taunting. It can also take an emotional toll.

These days, tormenting can also come in the form of social shunning or Internet harassment, and the social network is abused by spreading lies and gossip.

Few of us have the talent and fortitude of Lady Gaga. We can't write the music that turns the despair into inspiration. In the worst-case scenario, victims commit suicide.

How should one react to bullying? How does one recognize a friend or a child is being bullied? Where can you go to get help?

These are some of the topics that will be discussed in this year's Contra Costa Youth Summit that I am sponsoring. Some will remember last year's presentation by comedian Richard Pritchard. He had us laughing and

crying in his emotional rollercoaster of a speech.

The theme of the summit is "Ways to Prevent Bullying and How to Build Character." This year's speaker will be Mark Blackshear, a much sought-after speaker on youth behavior. Kaiser Medical Center's theatrical troupe will present a skit titled "Nightmare on Puberty Street."

The summit will be held 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. March 31 at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg. Lunch and a light breakfast will be provided at no cost. Students from sixth grade to high school are encouraged to attend the free event.

One of the workshops will talk about "cyberbullying." Victims may be picked on based on their race, gender, the way they dress, what neighborhood they live in, how they wear their hair, the way they speak or for any number of reasons.

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There will also be workshops on how to find a job, how stay out of gangs, learn the latest dance steps, how to manage your finances and other matters faced by young people today.

Demonstrations include airbrush tattoos, manicures, martial arts, weightlifting, Midnight Basketball, the Sheriff's helicopter will drop in, a demonstration of a police canine unit and firefighters and ambulance emergency medical technicians will be there. Deejay Lady Ray from KMEL will keep the music going and the energy high.

It is day packed with lots of good information that will help the young people get through what could be a difficult time in their lives and plan for their future. What we want them to know is that they don't have to go on this journey alone, that there is help out there, often at no cost.

The youth summit planners want to point out to youth that this is just the beginning of their young lives. If they have the right attitude, the skills and resources, they can improve themselves and the world they live in.

Stefani -- aka Lady Gaga -- rose above her high school tormentors and created a foundation called the Born This Way Foundation whose mission is to promote tolerance and fight bullying.

The Youth Summit might not have all the answers to bullying and its repercussions, but at least it can point young people in the right direction. It may be a small step ... but it is a hopeful step.

Glover represents District V on the Board of Supervisors. For more information about the Youth Summit, link to [www.cccounty.us/supervisorglover](http://www.cccounty.us/supervisorglover).

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**Federal  
Glover: Contra  
Costa Youth  
Summit takes  
on bullying**

*By Federal Glover For  
the Contra Costa Times  
Contra Costa Times*

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