

## **Around East County: East Contra Costa Youth Summit brings attention to bullying**

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Taunted, provoked and teased, that wild trio made those few months a bit nightmarish. Outdoor fun was limited, lest I run into those girls in the neighborhood. For unknown reasons, they had made me their target.

Not coincidentally, that summer my even tougher-than-nails mother enrolled me in kung-fu school. More than make me a competitive force (I ended up as a state champ, but that's another column); the self-defense lessons infused me with confidence.

I was still a nice and kind girl, but I learned a valuable lesson: to stand up for myself.

Our 10-year-old daughter certainly hasn't had that level of harassment, but she has had a few close encounters of the bullying kind.

Simply put: It stinks!

We're grateful she talks to us and tells us all that's happening. We're also involved and have great communication at our school. This all makes for a strong formula to counter the drama that sometimes plays out in classrooms and on the playground.

Bullying is no longer the threat of being beaten up by the big kid on campus. It's lots of little things -- from name-calling to teasing to controlling others and much more.

According to [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org), 56 percent of students have felt some sort of bullying at school. Stunningly, between fourth and eighth grades, 90 percent have been bullied.

"Researchers feel that bullying should not be treated as part of growing up; with the attitude of 'kids will be kids.' " Thankfully most schools, along with clubs, groups, churches and families, are proactive and tuned into these troubles.

Several campuses offer on-site assemblies, ongoing sessions about bullying and teachers pushing the word that bullying isn't tolerated. These are tools our children can use now, and down the road for the big world to come -- because bullies aren't just kids.

Knowledge of this kind equals power -- especially for young students.

You can gather more info on this during the March 31 Youth Summit, featuring entertainment and a leadership skills workshop, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Los Medanos College, 2700 E. Leland Road in Pittsburg. Sponsored by Supervisor Federal Glover, the event will also include info on how to deal with bullies, how to develop new friendships and a free lunch. For more info, call 925-335-8200. Registration is

at [www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=2839](http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=2839).

A teacher-friend recently started an anti-bully movement at his school in the East Bay, bringing attention to this issue and getting grand results. And, on March 30, "Bully," a film getting big buzz at major festivals opens in theaters. It's said to be eye-opening, moving and inspiring. The movie states this mind-boggling fact: "13 million kids will be bullied in the U.S. this year."

For more info, [www.thebullyproject.com](http://www.thebullyproject.com). Wondering what ever happened to that trio of mean girls during that long-ago summer? The one "friend" started a physical fight with me and I stood my ground. It was over lightening fast, but that girl and I never had issues again. In fact, years later we would reconnect and she would become an invaluable source for a project of mine.

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