

Bully Free Forever, students write



Macomb Daily staff photo by David Posavetz

Students K.J. Strickland, Terrence Echols, Andrew Thatcher and Jack Novak were among those who contributed to an anti-bullying book produced by the Great Oaks Academy charter school in Warren.

Warren teens share personal stories about being scared

By Frank DeFrank
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

If the pen is mightier than the sword, a group of students at the Great Oaks Academy in Warren is doing



its part to slay bullying. Six students and Principal Ricky Fountain recently completed work on a paperback book called, B.F.F. (Bully Free Forever). "Many of us remember

being scared to go to school, or hating to go in the lunchroom or go on the playground because the bully was there waiting inflict serious punishment on us," Fountain wrote in the book's introduction.

"I personally remember being bullied in high school and being ashamed to cry out for help. I never felt so helpless and alone."

Fountain enlisted the six students — in grades 6 through 8 at the time — and assigned each to research and write about a specific aspect of bullying. Students who participated in the project included: Terrence Echols, Jack Novak, Carson Phelps, Kyle Sheldon, K.J. Strickland and Andrew Thatcher.

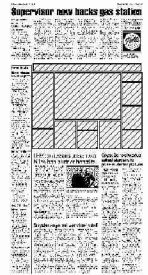
After interviewing his peers at the Great Oaks Academy, Strickland contributed these words of wis-

dom on cyber bullying:

"Most of the victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying admitted that the reason behind the bullying was jealousy. The perspective was that the girl being bullied was prettier, dressed nicer, was smarter or more popular than the bully. The normal tactic, it appears, is that the bully starts a rumor about a victim and spreads it around on the internet."

Jack Novak touched on the methods of bullying, including physical, emotional, verbal and cyber bullying. Based on his research, Novak determined more than three out of four kids endure some form of bullying.

"With this new era of the growing technology world, it is going to get worse before it gets better, unless you are part of the solution," Novak wrote.



B.F.F. is the latest literary project undertaken by students and staff at the Great Oaks Academy. Fountain, a self-described lover of the written word, encourages writing as a means for students to leave their mark. The students and staff have produced five books in the past four years.

“I want them to get into the

mindset they have the ability to do anything,” he said. “People respect those who know how to write.”

Fountain has a second motive. He believes a student who can write has a distinct advantage over others when it comes to getting into a quality college or nailing down a good job. Working on the books allows his students

to build a portfolio, he said. “That could be the tipping point,” he said.

B.F.F. (Bully Free Forever) is available at the Great Oaks Academy for \$10 or online at Amazon.com for \$12.99. Proceeds go to purchase I-Pads or U.S. Savings Bonds for deserving students.