



Judge, police put case against bullying to Sidney students

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Judge Derek Weimer and Officer Curtis Hofrock held an assembly at Sidney Middle School to inform seventh and eighth grade students about the implications of using smart phones in dumb ways.

Weimer pulled his cell phone out of his jacket pocket, held it high and said, "This is an incredibly powerful thing."

Weimer explained that cell phones today are not phones; they are computers with phone features. You can check your email, surf the web, take photos, log onto social media sites, text, check stocks, etc. He explained to the kids that these devices are an example of the quote from Spiderman, "With great power comes great responsibility."

Weimer urged students, "Before you take that picture, remember that whoever receives it can do whatever they want with it." Also, before sending a picture or text to ask themselves if their grandmothers would approve because lives change due to content sent via phones.

"Once you've hit send, you've lost complete control," Hofrock added. "It no longer belongs to you."

Weimer told the students of an incident with bullying in Florida that was brought to light earlier this month. A 12 year-old girl was incessantly 'terrorized'

for months by as many as 15 other girls. She committed suicide by jumping from a tower at a cement factory. Two girls (12 and 14) were arrested for aggravated stalking after one posted a status on Facebook where she admitted to bullying and saying that she did not care that the girl was dead.

These two girls were the main culprits and they harassed her to the extent of saying that she should "drink bleach and die." The girl transferred schools, but was still unable to escape the constant torment. When police seized the young girl's computer for the investigation, they found that her search history included "what is overweight for a 13-year-old girl," "how to get blades out of razors" and "how many over-the-counter drugs do you take to die."

Weimer encouraged students to talk to someone in their lives that they can depend on if they ever receive harmful texts. The psychological effects of bullying are just as damaging as the physical portion.

"It's a sad fact that they [kids] don't think about the future implications [of bullying]," Weimer said.

Taking and sending a risqué picture of oneself can result in distribution of child pornography charges, and bullies can face a number of charges from harassment to stalking. Every state but Montana has anti-bullying laws in place.

Officer Hofrock explained that the police department often receives reports of harassment via texts.

"It [texting] makes it easier. They don't have to look one another in the eyes," Hofrock said.

Most of these issues are dealt with at the school level. There has yet to be a case in Sidney that escalated to the criminal level.



SHANNON IRELAND / SUN-TELEGRAPH

Judge Derek Weimer answers questions from students about bullying at an assembly on Wednesday.



Judge Weimer spoke to students at Sidney Middle School about smart ways to use technology and how to avoid bullying.

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