

Anti-bullying conference aims to boost kids' resources

by Nathan Howes
Special to the Beaver

On Tuesday (Nov. 3), Halton students will learn effective ways to stand up to bullying.

The first annual Stand Up Revolution Leadership Conference for Grades 6-12 students in Halton and the Greater Toronto Area will be held at Oakville's The Meeting House, 2700 Bristol Circle, from 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

The free event (for schools) is being hosted by Kids 4 Kids, an organization launched in 1993 by Scott Graham, to help children become successful adults through leadership programs and summer camps.

The goal of the conference is to inspire leadership and teach effective anti-bullying strategies to those who attend.

"My hope for the conference is that the kids will leave with a lot of useful anti-bullying strategies. Some of them go to school and there will be a message with a lot of fluff around it," said Graham.

"Kids want more and they want to know how to be assertive, how to build confidence, how to improve their self-esteem and have that confidence to stand up to bullying."

Speakers and performers include The Spoons, Spider Jones, Scott Hammell, Blake Fly, Molly Burke, Tony Bartolli, Dr. Johanne Roberge, Michael McCreary and others.

Nathan McLeod, a former



Gordon Deppe

Halton student and actor on the TV show *Life with Boys* will be hosting the event with Shaq Lewis of *The Next Step*.

After founding Kids 4 Kids, Graham began an After School Leadership Program, bullyfreeME school assemblies and the Camp Kahuna Leadership summer camp.

The idea for the Nov. 3 conference stems from the programs, school assemblies, summer camps, Graham's anti-bullying DVD and five books he's written on the subject.

The event has been three years in the making.

"The hope is to have 1,500 kids at this conference to learn the strategies and then go home and back to their schools to teach their fellow students. Hopefully, this can be a yearly thing," said Graham.

He stated there is a need everywhere for anti-bullying forums, particularly in schools.

"The best defence against a bully is confidence. If you believe in yourself and feel



Scott Graham

good about yourself, you're more likely to stand up to that bully. It's balancing that kind of teaching and those opportunities with giving them concrete strategies," said Graham.

While social media has its advantages, its popularity among teens has made it another tool for bullies, he explained.

"Bullies can not only get you on the schoolyard, they can do it at home, too. Kids post things online and think they're anonymous. They have to be educated that everything is permanent," said Graham.

The Spoons singer/songwriter Gordon Deppe said his involvement with Graham goes back several years when the Burlington-based band played at a Kids 4 Kids summer camp.

What brought them back together was the release of the singer's book, *Spoonsed*, in 2014, he said.

Deppe will be speaking



Molly Burke

briefly and the Spoons will be opening and closing the conference with a performance.

The Oakville resident said he felt "some" bullying when he came to Canada as a child because he didn't speak English at the time.


"I think a lot of big performers start off as loners or are quiet and then they find their place, which happens to be music."

Deppe said a lot of great music comes from those who are marginalized or "feel like outsiders," noting many of the musicians he's met or toured with over the years were humble and quiet like he was growing up.

"It helps if somebody like myself says a few things about their experiences and what they went through," he said.

Students and schools can register for a waiting list spot (<http://goo.gl/qh7Jt7>) and while most general public tickets have sold out, Graham has a few left for \$20 each, which can be purchased by contacting him at grahams@hdsb.ca.

For more on Kids 4 Kids, visit the organization online at www.kids4kidsleadership.com.



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