

## Act by act, putting bullies in their place

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LUNENBURG -- Be a good friend. Learn when to ask for help. Treat others how you would like to be treated.

Students at the Primary School in Lunenburg learned the importance of those lessons and more Wednesday afternoon with the help of five professional actors from Plymouth State University's TIGER Program.

TIGER (Theater Integrating Guidance, Education, and Responsibility) is a collaboration of integrated arts, school counseling and school psychology. The professional theater company helps children, parents and communities work together to address social issues and concerns facing schoolchildren.

Primary School Principal Elaine Blaisdell said when she heard about the program, she thought it would be the perfect thing to bring to the students at the school, which houses children in pre-K through third grade.

"This is a fun and interactive way for them to understand that bullying is not acceptable anywhere, at any time. Hopefully this will help them be nicer to each other and take care of each other," she said.

The five TIGER actors put their various acts together through song and dance. Blaisdell said she heard about the program through the Maki Foundation, which was founded in honor of Lunenburg native Chris Maki, who was randomly attacked, stabbed, and left for dead in North Carolina.

Maki graduated from Lunenburg schools in 1984, and from Roger Williams University in 1988 with a bachelor of science degree in marine biology and chemistry. After graduation he worked at Clean Harbors of Boston and later transferred to their plant in Chicago. In December 1995, he accepted a position for Phillip Environmental in Kansas City before being transferred to North Carolina. Police said the men attacked and robbed Maki to support their crack addiction. All three pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and are serving sentences ranging from 19 to 34 years in North Carolina prisons. Jane Maki says police identified her son from a dry-cleaning tag in his pocket.

Shortly after his death, Jane Maki, her husband, Ray, and her twin children Amy and Drew started a foundation in Chris' honor annually soliciting donations and holding essay contests in his name at the middle school in Lunenburg. Essay winners receive scholarships from the foundation. With the 15th anniversary approaching, she said the family wanted to honor Chris in a very special way. Amy Maki, Chris' sister, recently began working at Plymouth State University and during her interview process, she found out about the TIGER program, in which five professional actors, three of them PSU grads, tour the country putting on dramatic performances related to bullying.

Amy and Jane Maki were both on hand for Wednesday's performances at the Primary School and were thrilled with the reactions by the students. "This was fabulous. Everybody was awesome. I hope the kids get the message presented here," Jane Maki said Wednesday afternoon.

Dave Rodgers, a family friend, said he was glad to see Chris' memory live on. "This is the perfect way for us to keep him alive. His legacy is continued through programs like this. I just hope that we've done something to help make a difference," he said. In addition to marking the 15th anniversary of Chris' death, the TIGER group is also celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

The actors were traveling around to all of the schools in the district over a two-day period, and having a parent workshop. The foundation and the school district both contributed to the cost of having the program.

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