

Last one picked

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Ben Anderson, Break Through Inc., speaks on bullying and disabilities at an assembly for the Newell fifth grade through high school students on Wednesday, Oct. 3. He asked the students to pledge to refrain from bullying.

October 23, 2012 3:15 am • [Colleen Brunner Butte County Post correspondent](#)

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NEWELL | Ben D. Anderson, Executive Director of Break Through Inc., is a keynote speaker who provides in-service training for schools, parent groups, universities, civic organizations, businesses and churches. The fifth grade through high school students at the Newell district didn't care about all that stuff as they listened to Anderson give a presentation on bullying and disabilities on Oct. 3 at Austin Auditorium.

The mission statement for Anderson's organization states that it is one of rehabilitation and advocacy for people with disabilities. Anderson suffers from complex health issues, primarily Parkinson's disease. His speech is not the clearest and his presentation physically is a bit erratic at times but the kids didn't seem to notice or care.

"Last One Picked, So What!" Anderson shouted out to the kids as he shared things about his childhood. His I.Q. is 63 and he said he suffered insults and bullying in his growing up years and beyond. With Parkinson's now affecting his verbal abilities, he was difficult at times to understand but his humor and stories went directly to the kids' hearts.

His time was short, just 30 minutes out of the students' day, but he was able to get his message across; how these kids needed to treat others with dignity and respect.

Anderson's presentations in schools are sponsored by the Department of Education and he is currently on a 26-school tour from Oct. 1 through Oct. 26 with over 45 presentations.

"How many families represented here have a family member with a disability?" asked Anderson of the students gathered. Fully one-third of the kids raised their hands. The Newell district is known for its high level of special needs kids and the excellent education they receive through the Special Education program.

"How did you deal with all the nasty things said about you?" asked one student of Anderson.

"You just hang in there and do the best you can in school," responded Anderson. He shared some coping skills but basically just showed the students that anyone can be a positive part of society. Anderson has two books that, with support from the Dept. of Ed, provide a total of 50 free books to each school. The first is "IQ of 63, So What!" gives Anderson's bio and education information. He said it is a good tool for teachers to use to help students understand those with physical or mental disabilities. His booklet, "Last One Picked, So What!," talks about bullying and disabilities and how teachers and students can make a big difference in the lives of people suffering through these things. "What is your favorite event?" shouted a student.

"Meeting with you," said Anderson with a smile. That brought a big applause from the Newell students.

Anderson, along with his wife Dee who is his driver, support staff and communicator, have the goal of increasing awareness of persons with disabilities in every community they visit.

The presentation was sponsored and supported by both the HOPE program and the WIT Coalition in their efforts to bring awareness and educational opportunities to the community. Next week the Coalition will bring Ed Moses, a specialist on drug education to the school. He will be doing a day-long presentation on October 16.

If someone would like more information about Anderson or Moses they can call Sabrina Harmon at 605-381-9136 or contact her at the school during regular school hours.

1) Comments

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Ben - October 28, 2012 10:50 am

Hello Newell school students, teachers and parents.

It was great to speak to your classes on October 3rd. I would like to correct some errors in the above post. I was born with cerebral palsy. I do not have Parkinson's disease nor do I have multiple issues. I have a degree in vocational rehabilitation from UW-Stout in Wisconsin. . Also my presentation was sponsored by the Developmental Disability Council of South Dakota and my own non-profit Break Through Inc. and the books were provided free by the Department of Education (Special Ed) of South Dakota. Sincerely, your friend Ben D. Anderson- CEO Break Through Inc. www.bendanderson.com

(Note: this is an article in the Rapid City Journal online at

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/newell/last-one-picked/article_d9dec7cc-6fa8-58d6-ad97-0d9187a43480.html