

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Governor,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am a 17 year old upcoming senior at Appoquinimink High School located in the State of Delaware, and I need your help. Each school day across our country over 160,000 kids will stay home from school just from the fear of being bullied. They will be too afraid to go to the bus stop or walk down their school hallway or sit in the cafeteria because they know that horrible things await them. They know that they will be teased, criticized, made fun of, and even suffer physical abuse. Bullying can erode self-esteem, impact learning at school, cause anxiety and depression, even lead to suicide. These kids need our help.

Last year I learned about Unity Day, an annual event sponsored by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, during PACER's National Bullying Prevention Month, which is held every October, they declare Unity Day. It is a day that has become a sign of hope to the many victims suffering from bullying. Simply by wearing orange we can declare that we are against bullying and that we stand together to support bullying victims everywhere, and to show them that they are not alone.

Last year I was successful in getting my school to participate in this very special day. I then began to ask myself "Where's the Orange". I soon decided to expand the knowledge and celebration of Unity Day by notifying other schools throughout the state and businesses around our city. But our work is not done, there are countless victims who need our help.

I am asking for your help to have Unity Day 2014 declared in your state. It is my goal to have this day declared by all 50 states, so that together as a country we can make a stand. This year's event will be held on October 22nd. By making this declaration and wearing orange on Unity Day we can stand as a sign of hope so that victims everywhere will know they are not alone.

You may ask yourself why this is so important to me. And maybe if I just said, I was one of the over 160,000 victims I spoke of earlier it would be enough, but I have attached a copy of my story in hopes that it may help you understand the suffering of just one.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2525927

Not a Story about a Bullying Victim

Not a Story about a Bullying Advocate

Just a Story about Me

Written by [REDACTED]

I would start my story with where it began but honestly I don't remember. I don't remember the first time I was laughed at, the first time I was called a name, the first time I was thrown against a locker or hit. I can't tell you any of this, because when it first started I didn't know that my own friends were bullying me.

The first time I can remember being bullied, was during grade school and I had recently moved. It was a couple months into the school year and it first dawned on me that I was being bullied, because we had the first bullying prevention seminar at my school. I then thought back to that very morning on the bus when I sat down in my seat, and at the next stop was pulled out of it, thrown on the floor, and laughed at. I thought that it was just some minor horseplay and that what was happening was just fun between classmates. I believed this wholeheartedly because I was never taught any different.

I was told what bullying was and how if you see it you are supposed to tell a teacher. So when I got out of my seat to tell a teacher, I was yelled at to sit back down. I tried and tried to tell the teacher but she just got more and more annoyed. Eventually, I stopped trying to tell people and just sat down. To this day, I still look back at that moment and think, what if that teacher had listened, what if I had kept trying instead of sitting down, what if life as I know it now could have changed because one moment would have changed the course of my history, and all it was, was me listening to what I had always been taught to do.

After the moment I decided to sit back and listen, I believe was the moment I decided I wasn't important enough for people to care about. My case couldn't be that bad if the adults I was supposed to talk to didn't care about it. So I let the harassment continue.

After a short time it progressed rapidly. The bullying went from being bullied on the bus by a kid I didn't know to having kids in my class bullying me. And it didn't stop. Every day from start to finish I was being bullied. From the time I stepped on the bus to the time I got off it at the end of the day.

It became so bad that I started telling my mom that I was sick so I wouldn't have to go to school. The worst part was I never told my mom. I felt like she was going to treat me the same way my teacher did. Not because she didn't care about me but because I was taught to treat my parents and teachers the same, with respect. Eventually my mom said that I had to stop faking sick, that I had to go to school or I would be held back. So I went to school, day after day after miserable day. I sat trying to pay attention to the teacher while being hit by crude jokes, and called names I didn't understand. These names didn't bother me it was the fact that when I looked confused they would make fun of me for being stupid.

Then middle school came along...

You wouldn't think middle school would change much, at least I didn't. I mean the classes weren't any harder, and it was all the same people, but now hormones had started to take shape in our personalities. People's attitudes had become more emotional and chaotic, and what would people do to calm them down, aim for the easiest target, the one that was too afraid to tell anyone about what was going on. So it got worse, days started off by playing a game of who could shoot the most spitballs at me, and then moved to who could fit me into a locker better, and finally moved into what embarrassing thing we can say I did. Everyone loved playing these games during the first 30 minutes of the school day before homeroom. This seemed to calm them down most days until lunch. However, some days, not everyone got their share of the games in before homeroom, and on those days, I would be kicked under the desk, or have water dumped on me, money stolen from me, some days all of this before the lunch bell even rang.

Lunch was a unique set of experiences for me. You see for me lunch wasn't about eating; it was about how do I avoid everyone I can. I would get in line and not make eye contact with anyone because that seemed to egg them on, buy my lunch if I still had the money, go sit down at an empty table and wait for something bad to happen. Now something bad didn't always happen you see, some days I could eat my lunch in peace and wait until next period to get bullied. However,

most days I was harassed at lunch. From people throwing my perfectly good lunch away, to people dumping theirs on me and the worst part was everyone watched, like they knew that it was going to happen before it happened.

After lunch I enjoyed the calm before the storm. The bus ride home was exceptionally cruel. It seemed all the people on my bus had to get in their last hits before the end of the day, so that's what they did; hit me, pushed me, threw me from seat to seat, stole my backpack, took my homework and ripped it to shreds. Why should I tell anyone, I was used to it by now? To me it was all part of a daily routine, something I was supposed to just let happen, I mean it couldn't get any worse. I was wrong because what came next was high school.

High school... I sit here thinking what could be the best way to describe how it appears to me. The time of loneliness, the torture from the second you step through the door, a roller coaster of despair that seems to just keep going down, or my personal favorite, the place where you find out who you truly are. Are you a jock who is popular and the star of the team, are you a nerd and the bottom of the totem pole, or an outsider who is just so well rounded they could do anything while doing nothing because they aren't exceptional enough at any one thing, the last one is like me. I am a little bit of everything but not enough to fit into one area or another.

I guess the best place to start would be the beginning. Freshman year, so many promises that were doomed to fail right from the start. My failure actually starts before the school year even started. It started with soccer tryouts. I had been playing soccer for many years as a goalie and I had gotten really good. However, for me it was more about helping other people to get them better so next year they could tryout again. During one of the tryout days, I had overheard one of the coaches saying how a kid was a strong striker if only he could learn to pass the ball. So thinking I could help him, I ran up and said that to him, little did I know I just painted a big red target on myself. From that point on he made it his goal to make me look as bad as he could. And he made the point clear by telling me so. The only sanctuary I got was when we split up for goalie tryouts. During this we were tested on many things and I counted that me and my friend were two of the best goalies there. After tryouts I found out that I hadn't made the team, so my mom emailed the coach. The coach told her that I had the skills to be a great goalie; however I was just too short to play on the high school team. I found out later in the year that my friend was told he wasn't skinny enough. The kid who I had tried to help had a target marked on me and wouldn't let me forget how I hadn't made the team. There wasn't a single day where it wasn't mentioned, even after the season was over.

The season for bullying never seemed to end. I felt so worthless and I hated myself for being the way I was, I mean it was all my fault. I was asking to be laughed at and made fun of. At least this was how I felt when my freshman year went on. Throughout my freshman year there was a feeling inside me that kept telling me not to join a club or tryout for anything else, because I wasn't good enough. A foolish part of me thought that this was as bad as my life could get, and yet again I was wrong, it could get worse.

Sophomore year, the next step in my life of torture... It is supposed to be the year you know what you want to do and you start going in that direction. For me it was still another year of misery in the form of harassment. This year I got a little braver and I tried out for the school play. That year our school performed "Little Women". I did get a role in which I played a character by the name of "Theodore (Laurie) Laurence". Now obviously being called Laurie in a play called "Little Women" was going to be called for some cheap shots. However they started from the day the cast list was posted to the end of the year. However something happened during my sophomore year that has changed my life forever.

During my sophomore year people just never seemed to run out of hurtful things to say or do to me. In fact they had started to resort to physical violence again, picking me up and throwing me to the ground, stepping on me and kicking me. It finally came to be too much for me and I started to plan my own suicide. I

was at a point so low that it is difficult to even put it into words. You feel worthless; like you don't deserve to stay where you are. I felt like the only way to escape was to end my own life. The thought of death actually brought me joy. I would sit in the corner of my room curled into a ball crying and thinking when a good time to execute it was and what to write in the letter for my parents to read after I'm gone. To think that I might not be writing this essay scares me, but if I hadn't gone that low then I wouldn't be writing this at all. It was the fact of how awful being that depressed made me show signs and it saved my life.

One day I walked into my science class and the night before I had been up writing a letter to my parents saying how I was sorry for taking my life. I had already planned on taking my life when I got home. The sleeplessness must have shown on my face because a girl asked me if I was okay, and I told her no, and in response she said that it will get better. And I sat thinking for a second on why she cared and I realized that not everyone was out to get me. I realized that there was a point to my life and that was to help other people. I knew and know that there are people out there that feel the way I felt and people that need help to realize that they are not alone. That the loneliness they feel isn't the best they can feel, and that they have a reason to live. All in that one brief moment I realized that I wanted to help the others that are too alone to fight for themselves.

So this is where my next chapter begins. The chapter in my life where I am no longer a victim, the chapter where the downhill roller coaster finally turns up and it never goes back down.

That is why I did the Unity Day 2013 Campaign for PACERs. At the beginning, I just wanted to help people in my school, but then I realized that there are people all over that need to know that they are not alone. So after getting Unity Day approved in my school, I knew that there was going to be a campaign there, and I decided to spread out. I then started to email principals from other schools and districts in the state, bringing bullying prevention across the state. I received a proclamation by the Mayor of Middletown saying that Unity Day was to be celebrated by the Town of Middletown. I set up a table at different events and places across the state and even had my entire school go orange. I received a few awards for my efforts but that was never what it was about for me. For me it was about how someone, somewhere now knew that they were not alone, that someone was out there fighting for them. I am now serving on the Faces of Change Youth Board for the PACERs organization and in a few years, I hope to be studying public relations in college, and when I graduate, to work for PACERs because I hope to help the victims of bullying to realize that they can fight, that they are not alone and that they too can stand up for themselves and others because they are out there, everywhere and they need help. They are alone right now, suffering to a

crime that has unforeseen consequences. There are people who need my help to know that they are worth something no matter how worthless they feel.

I don't know if this is what you were expecting to read when you began this story. As I think back to what I have written, I'm sorry I couldn't give more specific examples, I just don't remember them that way and part of me does not want to. I mentioned a few that I do remember. However, that's the thing about bullying, so much of it happens that it all just seems so usual to us. We remember special cases when it gets more physically severe or emotionally more demeaning, but as a whole it's just one never ending event.

All I want to do is whatever I can to help others like me, because if I don't, someone might take that final step I didn't, and take their own life, and this is something that should never happen.

Make it ORANGE and make it end! Unite against bullying!

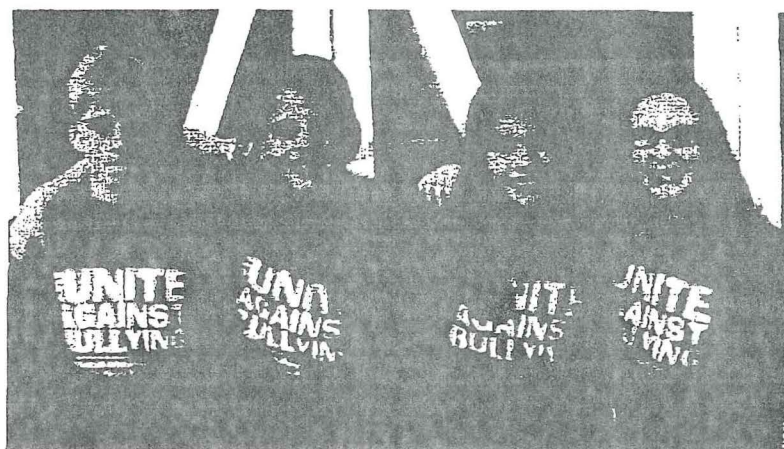
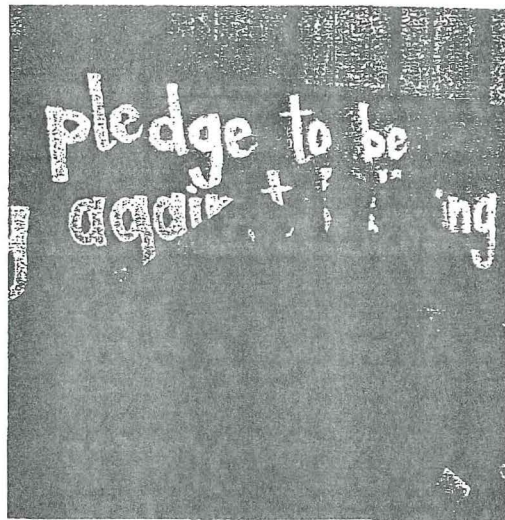
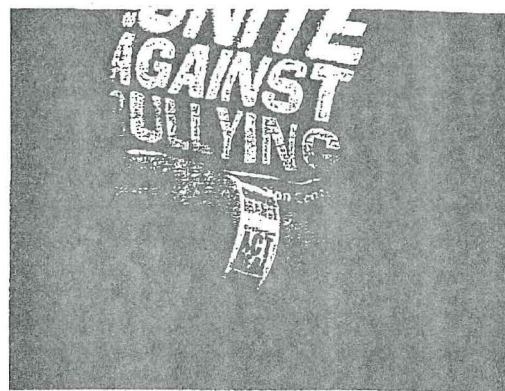
Sponsored by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center since 2011

What are your true colors when it comes to bullying? If you care about safe and supportive schools and communities make your color **ORANGE** on **Unity Day**. That's the day everyone can come together—in schools, communities, and online—and send one large **ORANGE** message of support, hope, and unity.

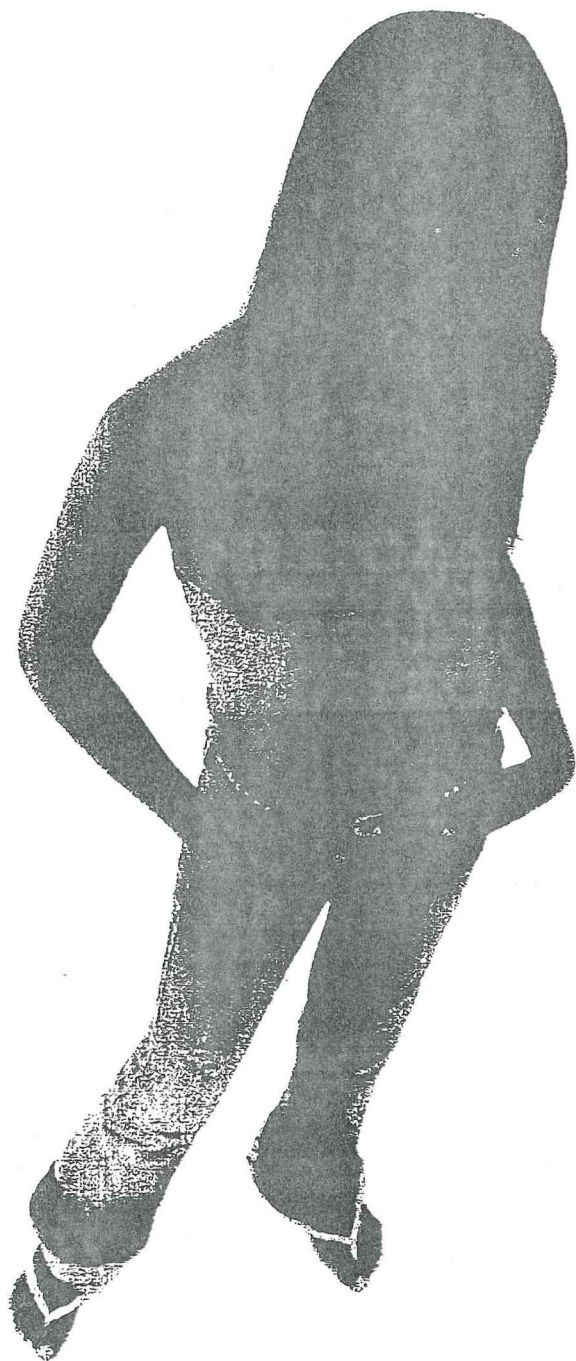
Wear **ORANGE**. It can be an orange T-shirt, tie, hat, wristband, socks, or even shoelaces.

Show your support beyond the school—wear ORANGE in the workplace, home and community.

PACER.org/Bullying



BE A CHAMPION AGAINST BULLYING



160,000 kids stay home from school each day to avoid being bullied

Bullying can erode self-esteem, impact learning at school, cause anxiety and depression, even lead to suicide. PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center is making a difference for kids, their parents, and schools by uniting, engaging, and educating communities nationwide to prevent bullying. Last year, 1.4 million people in nearly 200 countries used our web-based tools, and PACER's National Bullying Prevention Month has become a high-profile annual event that raises awareness from coast to coast. The impact is immeasurable and you can make it even bigger.

What can you do?

GO TO PACER'S WEBSITES

We have innovative, educational sites for children, teens, and adults, and all three have valuable information, resources, and ideas that you can use in your community.

GET INVOLVED HOWEVER YOU CAN

Help spread awareness during PACER's National Bullying Prevention Month in October. Wear orange on Unity Day and show that you care. Plan a Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying event in your community. Or choose one of many other ways to get involved all year long.

GIVE GENEROUSLY TO KEEP KIDS SAFE

Make a donation online at PACER.org/Bullying so that together we can help prevent bullying. Your contribution will help students across the country feel safer. It could even save someone's life.

The End of Bullying Begins with You

START USING OUR WEBSITES

Access the free, creative tools that can really make a difference if you download them to use where you live.

- Find incredible resources for parents, teachers, and other adults at PACER.org/Bullying
- Check out all of the cool, edgy, interactive teen resources at PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org
- Make the most of fun, age-appropriate activities for elementary school at PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org

SHARE YOUR STORY

We want to hear from you. Send your story, picture, song, video, or poem to Bullying411@PACER.org and tell us how you overcame a bullying situation or helped someone else do the same.

SHOW THAT YOU CARE

Tell us why you care about this issue and join with thousands of others around the world by signing PACER's online petition: "The End of Bullying Begins with Me!" at PACER.org/Bullying/digitalpetition.

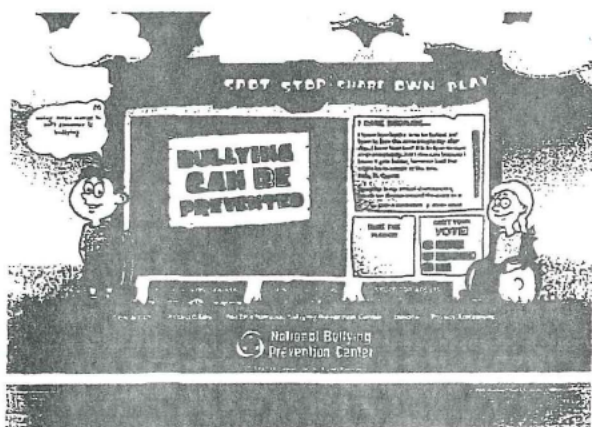
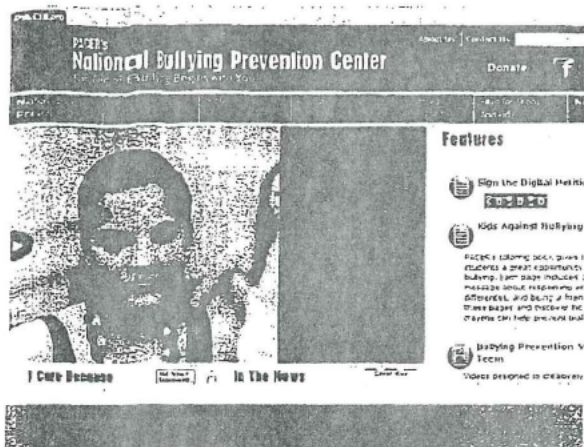
SPEAK OUT IN OCTOBER

You need to take action and October is an ideal time to start. It's National Bullying Prevention Month and it makes an impact all across America. You can make it even bigger in your school, your community, and online by getting your friends involved.

- **Ellen DeGeneres wore orange on Unity Day and you can, too.** Order the official T-shirt at PACER.org/Bullying/nbpm so your community can "Make it Orange, Make it End!"
- **Do a Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying event on your home turf.** It's easy, it's fun, and you'll be supporting a great cause. We've even got a free toolkit at PACER.org/Bullying to help you do it.
- **Educate others on bullying prevention.** Use the lesson plans, classroom toolkits, and other creative resources in your school.

SUPPORT THE CAUSE

We can't do it without you. People all over the country hold fundraisers, stage special events, and give generously. We hope you will do the same. Go to PACER.org/Bullying for ideas on what you can do.



New design launching in Fall 2012!