

# PAL TO PAL

## Building Healthy Lives



SUMMER  
2004

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**D**eveloping a healthy lifestyle is critical to our overall well-being and is based on making good choices in all areas of our lives. Sometimes we categorize “healthy choices” as the things we choose to eat and how much we exercise. These choices are important, but so are the choices we make regarding who our friends are, how we spend our time and how we see ourselves.

As they work to develop healthy lifestyles, today’s FFA members can also help their young pals develop healthy habits. These habits can include everything from nutrition and exercise to self-concept and selecting safe environments.

### Nutrition and Exercise

In the nutrition arena, some companies are moving toward healthier offerings. For example, McDonald’s recently announced that it is offering healthier Happy Meals. Consumers can choose apples in place of french fries, and milk in place of soda. There is even a “GoActive! Happy Meal” for adults that includes a pedometer and bottled water.

FFA members can help their pals learn to make good food choices, and show them how exercise can be fun by approaching physical activity as “play” versus the dreaded “exercise.” Along the way, FFA members will reinforce their own understanding of nutrition and exercise, and hopefully, develop good habits themselves.

### Self-Concept

One big area that is frequently overlooked is the role self-concept plays in the choices people make. If a child sees him or herself as unattractive or overweight, he or she may

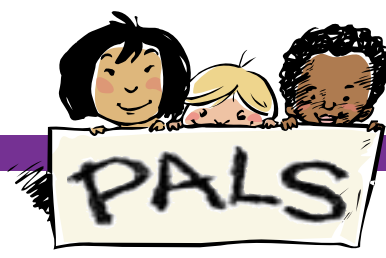
shun physical activity. This choice is frequently the result of playground bullying. If a child has been mocked by another, or made to feel clumsy or inadequate, he or she may avoid activities that might lead to additional bullying. By helping their Pals understand bullying and how to deal with it, FFA members can help make schools safer environments.



The same concept applies to academic skills. If a child isn’t confident in his or her reading abilities, that feeling of inadequacy can translate to poor classroom performance across the board. By helping their pals develop strong reading skills and reinforcing positive self-concept messages, FFA members can provide an amazing level of support that manifests itself in stronger academic performance.

Tied together, all of these elements can help both sets of young people develop healthy habits and positive life skills. You’ll find articles with additional information about forming healthy habits throughout this issue.





## Take Action for Health

**T**oday's news is full of reports about obesity and its effects on health. Of particular importance is the tripling of overweight and obesity in American children in the last 20 years. Most overweight children have at least one medical complication, such as Type II diabetes, gallbladder disease, asthma or sleep apnea.

Research indicates that overweight adolescents have a 70 to 80 percent chance of becoming obese adults. That means today's heavy kids, who already have to contend with the negative psychosocial effects of being overweight (depression, anxiety disorders and isolation from their peers) most likely will suffer the health consequences of adult obesity, including diabetes, coronary heart disease and hypertension.

### Action for Healthy Kids

The National FFA Organization recently began working with Action for Healthy Kids, an integrated, national-state effort addressing childhood obesity that focuses on changes in the school environment. Through AFHK, state teams are developing and implementing plans to address this growing challenge.

“We are excited about working with FFA chapters and members,” says Mary Haley, AFHK program director. “I encourage chapter leaders to visit our website at [www.actionforhealthykids.org] and join the AFHK teams in their states.”

AFHK's founding chair was former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher,

MD, PhD. Satcher says, “Studies have shown that physical activity and good nutrition improve students' academic performance, concentration, mood and discipline. Schools need our support to help them deliver the kind of education—academic, nutrition and fitness—children will need to succeed in their adult lives. We are looking forward to working with FFA chapter and members on this vital issue of children's health.”

### Resources Available

FFA members can develop healthy habits and help their elementary pals by teaching lessons on good nutrition and exercise through the PALS program. The topic offers a broad range of activity ideas – everything from good nutrition to physical activities. You will find great ideas in the PALS Activity Handbook III (available free through the National FFA Organization at [www.ffa.org/chapters/pals/pals\_cdorder.cfm]) and also on the Action for Healthy Kids website [www.actionforhealthykids.org].

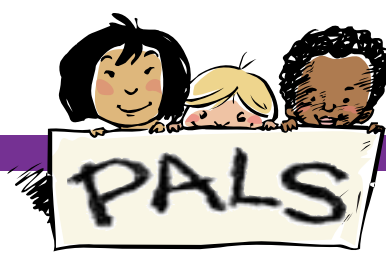
School-based efforts such as PALS represent the best opportunity to promote American children's current and future well-being—both physical and economic—because long experience indicates that healthy behavior and academic achievement are mutually reinforcing. Students who take care of their health tend to perform better academically than students who do not, and students whose academic achievement is above average tend to take better care of their health.

### Making a Commitment

*Commitment to Change* is AFHK's guiding document. It is adapted from the *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. The *Commitment to Change* includes:

- Provide age-appropriate and culturally sensitive instruction in health education and physical education that help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors to adopt, maintain and enjoy healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle.
- Provide students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 with behavior-focused nutrition education integrated into the curriculum that is interactive and teaches the skills they need to adopt healthy eating habits.
- Provide all children, from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with quality daily physical education that helps develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and confidence needed to be physically active for life.
- Provide adequate co-curricular physical activity programs, including fully inclusive intra-mural programs and physical activity clubs.
- Encourage the use of school facilities for physical activity programs offered by the school and/or community-based organizations outside of school hours.





# Fishing Derby Generates Smiles, Life Skills

**M**other Nature provided the Cabot FFA Chapter with a perfect spring day for its first-ever “PALS Fishing Adventure.” On Friday, April 16, 44 FFA members and their 88 second- through fourth-grade pals exchanged their pencils and paper for poles and nets at the new City of Cabot Community Fishing Pond.

“We saw this activity as a way of getting the youngsters excited about learning,” says Kevin Woodrow, one of the agriculture teachers at Cabot High School. “We started preparing the elementary students several weeks before the event. We had several beginners’ resources from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) that we used as a reading exercise. During the derby, they learned more about habitat, how to fish and a variety of different wildlife.”

## Community Connections

The FFA members worked with several different organizations to stage the successful event. First, they contacted the AGFC. Representatives of the commission’s Aquatic Resources Education program stocked the pond with 500 pounds of channel catfish. Jimmy Barnett of the AGFC also brought a mobile aquarium display, which contains a tank holding 1,000 gallons of water and lots of different animal species. Barnett was kept busy during the event helping youngsters identify everything from minnows and turtles to the fish that were caught.

Next on the to-do list was contacting companies that make fishing equipment. The Shakespeare Company, headquartered in Columbia, South Carolina, donated 50 fishing rods and other equipment for the participants, plus “goodie bags” and event prizes.

## Life Skills and Leadership

“Even though we are in a fairly rural area, most of the kids had never fished before,” Woodrow says. “That goes for my students as well as the elementary students. We had a practice fishing day for the FFA members about a week before the event so they could learn how to use the equipment properly and provide good guidance for their pals.”

The mayor of Cabot also got in on the action. “This was an awesome thing for our town,” says Mickey “Stubby” Stumbaugh. “I was an FFA member in high school, but we didn’t have the PALS program then. This is a terrific way for today’s high school students to get involved with youngsters

and provide leadership by example.”

Stumbaugh continues, “The FFA members and their advisors, Mr. Woodrow and Mr. White, deserve a lot of credit for the work they are doing with these students.”

Monica Coker, the Cabot FFA Chapter president, appreciated the mayor’s attendance. “It was great to have Mayor Stumbaugh there,” Coker says. “His involvement as a community leader provided a big boost for the event.”

Beyond the technical skills and knowledge gained that day, the participants had a great day enjoying the outdoors. “We had many comments from youngsters who said they would be bringing their dads, uncles and grandpas back on the weekend,” Woodrow comments. “Hopefully, this event helped the students understand that getting outside and getting some exercise can be fun. It may have been the first time many of them went fishing, but I’ll bet it won’t be the last.”

Coker agrees. “The kids really got into it. They were out running around the pond and having a great time. They didn’t even realize they were exercising because they saw it as just having fun. Being a part of PALS is humbling and inspiring. You never know the difference you’re making in your young pals’ lives.”





## Offering a Hand of Hope

**C**hris Devlin of Idalia, Colo., may seem like a typical high school senior at first glance. But, take another look and you'll find a young man whose depth of character challenges the depth of the subterranean wells that provide water in this parched, high plains community.

Devlin, a senior who is finishing up his term as chapter FFA president, carries a wide load of activities ranging from National Honor Society and Future Business Leaders of America to basketball and track. Beyond those activities, Devlin accepted a special assignment last fall that has enriched his life and provided assistance to a child in need.

Last fall, Devlin's agriculture teacher, Donna Karspeck, was approached by the school's counselor, who asked if she knew of a student who would be willing to work with a fifth-grade student in need of extra attention. It turned out a youngster had come to this small community to live with his grandmother and great-grandmother because his parents were unable to care for him. This youngster was having trouble in school and needed help developing social skills. He was a very lonely, angry child.

### Accepting the Challenge

Karspeck asked Devlin if he would be interested. "At first, I was hesitant because I didn't know if I had time in my schedule, but I decided to go for it and the experience has been incredible," Devlin says.

Most days when the two of them get together, they spend time tossing a ball or just talking about the challenges the fifth-grader is facing. However, some days they plan special activities together.

"He didn't know how to ride a bicycle," Devlin says, "So, I taught him. Another teacher had a bicycle that her kids had outgrown, so she gave it to us. At first, he couldn't ride at all, but now he's zipping along. It has been amazing to watch the progress and be a part of that experience."



*Chris Devlin*

### Enjoying the Benefits

Devlin says being a part of the PALS program is hard to describe. "It is so much fun just to sit down and talk about anything and everything," he says. "It makes me really happy to see how excited the children are and to see things through their eyes. Through the PALS activities, we've had a chance to form relationships with elementary

students. It is a great experience when you pass each other in the hallway and they give you a high-five or a hug."

Devlin says the experience has helped clarify his thinking regarding a college major. "I really enjoy helping people and reaching out to those in need," he says. "I would like to become a psychologist so I can continue helping people."

Karspeck says the experience has proven beneficial to the youngster as well. "He still has a few problems, but he has responded well to Chris' leadership and he now has a positive male role model in his life. That is huge for this particular child."

### Building a Sense of Belonging

Consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Social needs follow close on the heels of physiological and safety needs. Once a human being has his or her physiological (food, thirst, shelter) and safety (protection from physical harm) needs met, the focus is on social needs – acceptance, friendship and a sense of belonging. These are the things Devlin provided to his special pal. These are the things that can make all the difference in how a child sees him or herself, and in turn, the world.

Are there youngsters in your community that could benefit from an extended hand of hope? Use the PALS program to reach out to those in need and enjoy making a young person's world a happier place.





# Fun Resources from the National Agricultural Library

**M**ost young people don't necessarily automatically equate the term "library" with "fun." However, in the case of the National Agricultural Library, fun ideas can be found online by the boatload.

"We are always looking for ideas and ways to get young people engaged in learning," says Deborah Richardson, the education and outreach coordinator at the National Agricultural Library. "Our intent is to provide classroom-ready materials that are fun for kids and simple to implement for teachers."

Richardson creates a new activity annually with the PALS program in mind. The lessons are tied to different subject areas—e.g. math and language arts—and are based on agricultural topics, such as entomology.

## Online Resources

Richardson's latest effort was released in January and is entitled, "Insects: The Good, the Bad and the Unusual." It is targeted at late elementary students and is available from the National Agricultural Library website by visiting, [[http://www.nal.usda.gov/outreach/fun\\_stuff.htm](http://www.nal.usda.gov/outreach/fun_stuff.htm)]. You can download a PDF version, or order hard copies by writing to: National Agricultural Library, Education and Outreach, 10301 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705.



## One-Stop Shop for Agricultural Information

The National Agricultural Library, headquartered in Beltsville, Maryland, is the largest agricultural library in the world and is part of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Beyond the information it provides for children, you'll find an array of resources you can use in all the various components of the agricultural education program.



Another good place to find activities for your PALS program is on the youth and kids page at [[www.nal.usda.gov/outreach/youthkids.htm](http://www.nal.usda.gov/outreach/youthkids.htm)]. Among the items available on this site are pages from the Agricultural Statistics Service that will sharpen math skills. Science-based activities are also available, and some are available in Spanish. You can even sign up for e-mail alerts regarding new material releases.





# Help Stop Bullying in Your School



**A** lot of young people have a good idea of what bullying is because they see it every day. It happens a lot more than some people think. Studies show that between 15-25 percent of U.S. students are bullied with some frequency, while 15-20 percent report they bully others with some frequency.

Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over.

The following actions are all considered bullying:

- punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- spreading bad rumors about people that hurt them emotionally
- keeping certain people out of a group
- teasing people in a mean way
- getting certain people to gang up on others

There are many ways that young people bully each other, even if they don't realize it at the time.

Unfortunately, not everyone takes bullying seriously, including adults.

## Effects of Bullying

If you've ever heard anyone else say that bullying is "just a fact of life," or "no big deal," you're not alone. Too often, people just don't take bullying seriously until the sad, and sometimes scary, stories are revealed. Here are the grim facts.

- Bullying can mess up a kid's future. Young people who bully are more likely than those who don't bully to skip school and drop out of school. They are also more likely to smoke, drink alcohol and get into fights (Nansel et al, 2003; Olweus, 1993).
- Bullying scares some people so much that they skip school. As many as 160,000 students may stay home on any given day because they're afraid of being bullied (Pollack, 1998).
- Bullying can lead to huge problems later in life. Children who bully are more likely to get into fights and vandalize property. And 60 percent of boys who were bullies in middle school had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24 (Olweus, 1993).

## Why Do Kids Bully?

There are all kinds of reasons why young people bully others, either occasionally or often. These include:

- I see others doing it
- it's what you do if you want to hang out with the right crowd
- it makes me feel stronger, smarter, or better than the person I'm bullying
- it's one of the best ways to keep others from bullying me

Whatever the reason, bullying is something we all need to think about. We need to recognize that bullying has a terrible effect on the lives of young people. Working together, FFA members can help make the lives of young people better.

## Dealing with Bullies

Through the PALS program, FFA members can learn more about bullying, and teach their young mentees how to deal with bullies. Here are a few discussion points for the high school students:

- Inform students from the beginning that bullying (verbal or physical) is not tolerated in the school. Everyone is expected to ensure that it does not happen and has the responsibility to report bullying to an adult in a position of authority at the school.
- In class, have the students discuss bullying; what it is, what can be done, etc.
- Have the students conduct a school survey to find out what other students, teachers and staff think about bullying.
- Have the students compile the survey and allow them to call a school assembly to announce the results.
- Have the classes make up rules for behavior. Agree on a class/school set of rules.
- Have the children discuss ways to help the bullies become part of the group.
- If bullying is happening, find out the facts, talk to the bullies and victims individually. If the bullying is about a particular issue (e.g. death, divorce, disfigurement), mount an educational program about the problem, but not focused on a particular child. Call in parents, ask for their suggestions and solicit their support.



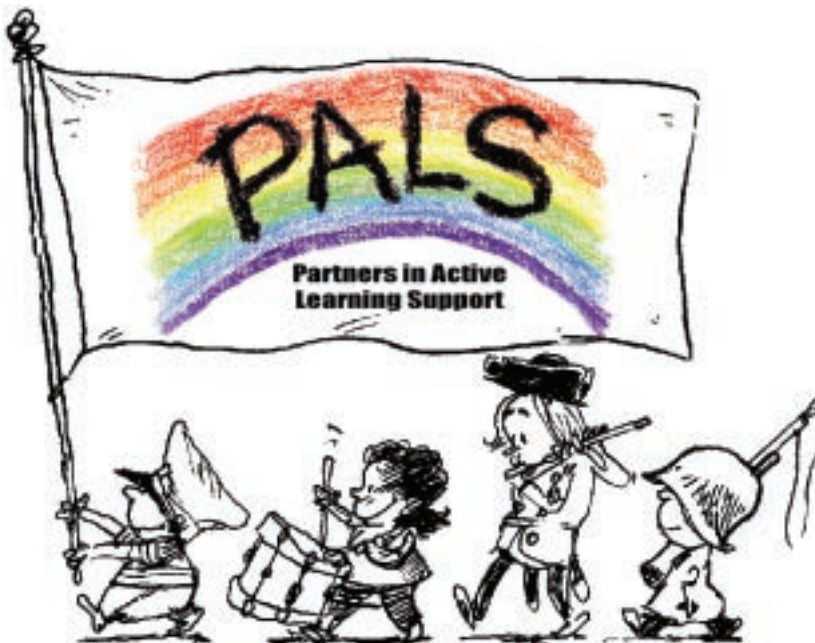
- If necessary, break up the group dynamics by assigning places, keeping bullies at school at the end of the day, etc. Most bullying groups have a leader with other children being frightened of not bullying. Turn peer pressure against bullying and break up groups.
- Teach children to be assertive using one of the many programs available. Differences should be acceptable and never a cause for bullying. Reward and encourage children for individuality.
- Use the quiz contained in the sidebar to help students self-identify bullying habits.

## Resources

A quick Google search brings up a whopping 330,000 references to bullying along with a slew of links to resources. Here are a few links that can serve as a starting point:

- [www.pta.org/bullying/](http://www.pta.org/bullying/)
- [www.education-world.com/a\\_lesson/lesson191.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson191.shtml)
- [www.bullyonline.org/schoolbully/](http://www.bullyonline.org/schoolbully/)
- [www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp)

In addition to these resources, FFA chapters in several states are planning to implement a new program called "Bullying Hurts." Created by Starvin' Marvin Nash, a professional rodeo clown, Bullying Hurts is a community service program focusing on positive youth development and prevention of anti-social behavior in schools and communities. See the story on page 8 for additional details.



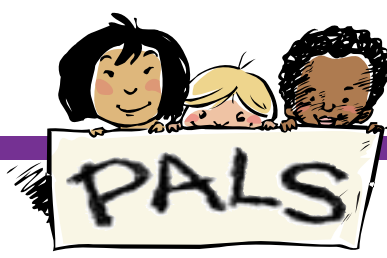
## Do You Bully Others?

Okay, time for the truth. Or at least time to consider if you have a confession to make! Take this quiz to find out if you've ever bullied someone.

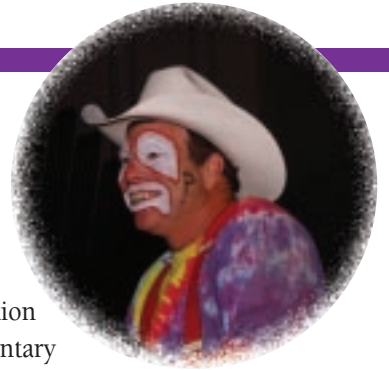
Put a check in the boxes if you've done these things before.

- There's a boy or a girl (or maybe more than one) whom you've repeatedly shoved, or punched or physically pushed around in a mean way just because you felt like it.
- You had someone else hurt someone you don't like.
- You've spread a nasty rumor about someone, in conversation, in a note, or through e-mail or instant messaging.
- You and your friends have regularly kept one or more kids from hanging out or playing with you. Examples: at your lunch table at school, during sports or other activities, or activities that are a part of a club or other kind of group activity.
- You've teased people in a mean way, calling them names, making fun of their appearance, or the way they talk or dress or act.
- You've been part of a group that did any of these things - even if you only wanted to be part of the crowd.

If you checked any of these boxes, you're not alone. All over the country, in all types of neighborhoods and schools, there are all types of young people who bully others. Bullying is serious business. It causes young people a lot of pain, and it can affect their ability to do well in school and their general happiness. But it doesn't have to be that way. You can make a difference by changing your actions.



## Bullying Hurts



**F**FA chapters have a new resource to use in the quest to stop bullying. “Bullying Hurts” is a community service program designed to be delivered to elementary students by high school students and is a great fit for the PALS program.

The program consists of six 30-minute lessons designed to be presented to elementary students over six weeks. The lessons help children identify what bullying is and how to deal with the problem.

Created by Starvin’ Marvin Nash, a professional rodeo clown and educational consultant, the materials play on rodeo bull and clown analogies. The

result is a humor-filled way to study the serious subject of bullying.

“Preventing bullying all comes down to young people learning how to make good choices,” Nash says. “FFA members have the leadership and communications skills needed to present these materials to elementary students. When the program has been completed, the elementary students are equipped to deal with bullies.”

Cody Nash, a past national FFA officer and Marvin’s son, is assisting in training FFA members. A professional bull rider himself, Cody is leading training workshops for FFA members who are interested in presenting the

information to elementary children in their communities.

As part of the program, members are trained to implement the program and receive a kit of materials, which includes scripts, posters, worksheet masters, a videotape and even a marker—everything needed to present the program.

For more information on Bullying Hurts, visit [www.sort-it-out.org](http://www.sort-it-out.org), or call 856-769-3621.



## Addressing School Safety Requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act



**U**nder the No Child Left Behind Act, which was signed into law in 2002, all schools must implement violence prevention programs that meet specified principles of effectiveness. The programs must be grounded in scientifically based research that provides evidence that they will reduce violence and illegal drug use. Under No Child Left Behind, states must report school safety statistics to the public on a school-by-school basis, and districts must use federal school-safety funding to establish a plan for keeping schools safe and drug free. These plans must include:

- appropriate and effective discipline policies;
- security procedures;
- prevention activities;
- student codes of conduct; and
- a crisis management plan for responding to violent or traumatic incidents on school grounds

FFA chapters can help their schools and districts meet these requirements by implementing bullying prevention programs. Advisors are encouraged to touch base with their school administrators to see what the district has planned and where the chapter might be able to implement a bullying program.

