

By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-Publisher

We've all heard the reports of young people who have been singled out by the bullies at school. They've taken all they can. Seeing no other way to deal with it, these young people some as young as 11, have turned to suicide to escape.

We're sticking our heads in the sand if we believe that one of those tragic situations couldn't happen here!

Let's face it—we've all been bullied at some time in our life AND we've all been the bully. And one thing's for sure—it's not much fun to be on the receiving end.

Bullying used to be considered just part of growing up but fortunately that perception is beginning to change and well it should.

Last week, songwriter Steven Sesking was in Imperial to perform. In 1999, he and a friend authored a song that has become the basis for a whole character education curriculum in schools to deal with bullying, respect and kindness.

He brought that message to an auditorium full of elementary students at Chase County Schools.

He challenged the students to remember what it felt like when they got made fun of, were called names or bullied around. They all agreed it wasn't much fun.

While it may seem like horseplay, these intimidating actions can have a long-term negative affect on the recipients. And guess what, bullying isn't just limited to kids.

I thank Seskin for working to teach our kids respect, kindness and compassion. We can all take a lesson from him and act accordingly ourselves and provide our young people with the example they deserve.

It's only seems fitting to close by sharing the words of their song, "Don't Laugh at Me."

I'm a little boy with glasses
The one they call the geek
A little girl who never smiles
'Cause I've got braces on my teeth
And I know how it feels
To cry myself to sleep

I'm that kid on every playground
Who's always chosen last
I'm the one who's slower
Than the others in my class
You don't have to be my friend
But is it too much to ask

Refrain:

Don't laugh at me
Don't call me names
Don't get your pleasure from my pain

In God's eyes we're all the same
Someday we'll all have perfect wings
Don't laugh at me

I'm the beggar on the corner
You've passed me on the street
And I wouldn't be out here beggin'
If I had enough to eat
Don't think I don't notice
That our eyes never meet

Refrain

I was born a little different
I do my dreamin' from this chair
I pretend it doesn't hurt me
When people point and stare
There's a simple way
To show me just how much you care

Refrain

I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall
I'm deaf, I'm blind, hey, aren't we all

Refrain