

I Power I

The I Power I International Anti-Bullying Festival for Young People is an annual event produced by young people for young people with the support of adults. It is an international event that in 2006 will be held in the South West of England on 20-21 November, to coincide with Anti-Bullying Week. It is open to any young person in Britain (and abroad) and will be held at the "Winter Gardens", Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, England UK.

How did the event come about? Andy Hickson, Director of Actionwork explains....

“I was what you might call your average 11-year-old boy - medium build, medium height, liked a bit of sport, was fit and healthy. I had a couple of close mates and was just starting to get interested in girls. One day after school, another student and his brother followed me, calling me names and kicking my school bag out of my hand. I ignored it and eventually they left me alone to walk home. I soon forgot it, until the next day, when the same thing happened again. For no apparent reason I was being victimised every day by this boy at school and his brother. I started taking a different route home which worked for a few days, but they got wise to this and started waiting for me, jumping out, pushing me, calling me names, asking for money, taking my bag, throwing it about, tripping me up and generally making fun of me. I was a proud boy and I tried not to look hurt and I did not want to run, but I also did not fight back. I just took it. I never told anyone about it, I was not going to be called a snitch and I felt I could handle it myself. In reality I was suffering.

It went on for at least three or four months, making me as miserable as hell. I wasn't eating, I started missing school and I pushed my friends away, suffering in silence. No one knew what I was going through, apart from these two boys, not even my family guessed that something was wrong. One Sunday I cycled down to the local adventure playground. After chaining my bike to the fence I started playing on the flying fox. I was suddenly confronted by three boys, one of them the brother of the boy at

school, the other two were his mates. They wanted my bike. I refused to give it to them, so one of them punched me really hard in the mouth (I lost a tooth) and knocked me to the ground. They then held me while the brother went through my pockets looking for the key to the bike padlock. They couldn't find it. They then started kicking me in the head and in the body. My head was covered in bruises and my face was stinging from the blows. They then stripped me naked, pinned me to the ground and rubbed a stinging nettle in my eyes, over my cheeks and across my lips, taunting me while the other two watched and laughed. It felt like I was being tortured for hours, but it couldn't have been more than five or ten minutes. Eventually they got off me, spitting in my face and warning me that if I told anyone I would die. I was then rolled naked down a hill that was covered thick with stinging nettles. They ran off laughing. No one came to help me. I was in so much pain I could not scream, I could not cry, I could not talk. My skin was on fire. I gathered my clothes together, got dressed, collected my bike and cycled home.

When I got home my mum went crazy, almost going to the police, but I would not say who had done it or where it had happened. I was no snitch. My skin stung for almost two weeks. I never went back to school and I never saw any of my tormentors again.

Soon after that incident my mum took me, my brother and my sister to South East Asia where we lived a totally different life. My mum was doing some research of a tribe that lived in the jungle, and we lived with them, for two years, in the middle of the rainforest. It was

an amazing experience. This tribe is described as one of the most peaceful groups of people in the world. In the two years that I lived in the jungle I never saw a single fight, a parent never hit a child, and a man never hit his wife. There were arguments now and again of course, but people always found non-violent ways of dealing with them.

This experience was very different to experiences I had had in Britain, and helped to mould my future. I experienced people living in peace and I experienced young people who were empowered and had a voice. These two concepts became very important to me and have been the focus of my work for many years now. And this is where I Power I came in...”

Andy created the I Power I International Anti-Bullying Festival for Young People four years ago as a way of empowering young people. He describes it as a “fantastic uplifting and positive event” with young people contributing from all over Britain and abroad about bullying, anti-bullying strategies, resources and showcasing best practice in dealing with and tackling bullying. This year's programme will include youth speakers, government ministers, anti-bullying practitioners, entertainment, workshops, exhibitions, special guests and celebrities.

For more info or to book a place, contact: 01934 815163, or visit: www.bully.org

Book Now!

I Power I
National Anti-Bullying Conference
For Young People 2006

Open to young people from all over Britain and abroad

20th to 21st November
Winter Gardens
Weston-super-Mare

www.bully.org
Tel: 01934 815163

Dance
Fun
Free Entry
Workshops
Celebrities
Music
Free Lunches
DJs
Cool Venue
Anti-Bullying Specialists
Youth

Save the Children
North Somerset Council
Department for education and skills