

Ukulele Music

Keith: welcome to LeeCoSchools Edcast number 15 with Theresa Owen so October is bullying prevention Awareness Month and so we talked to Teresa because she is a counselor out at Loachapoka high school

Kyle: and so the counselors will see this stuff a lot more than probably anybody else in the schools

Keith: yes hopefully they are better trained to deal with it when the need arises absolutely she was just man she was super prepared

Kyle: she was you know she's been with Lee County for a long time and just a very knowledgeable person already in general and then she came in you know I we knew it was gonna be a good conversation but boy I really felt pleased with what we got on the recording

Keith: yeah and I felt bad about how much research she did cuz there's more research than I had done I said

Kyle: you thought you were good and she came in with books it was blowing me away it was very good she's a good friend of mine we worked very closely together and with some of the SIS stuff and so I'm pleased that it went the way it did

Keith: and just another person who is just a ray of sunshine absolutely it's super nice always easy to talk to absolutely this will be a very informative yet enjoyable listen

Kyle: I learned something

Keith: um and yes I learned quite a bit after listening and learning if you find yourself with more questions or comments complaints criticisms compliments we always want compliments we've got yet to get a compliment really via email

Kyle: there might be a reason for that

Keith: shhhhh! I'm not thinking about that! also any colloquialisms conundrums are even a concern you can find us on the web at www.lee.k12.al.us/edcast you can find us on Twitter @leecoschools, you can find us on facebook at facebook.com/leecoschools and new i have recently created an instagram account for lee county so you can also find us on instagram at @leecoschools you can also find us on the Lee County App we have our own icon that takes you directly to our page and you'll find the Lee County app on Google Play or the Apple App Store or you can email us at edcast@lee.k12.al.us so without further adieu Kyle

Kyle: heeere we go

Funky Transition Music

Kyle: introduce yourself tell us who you are tell us what your background is

Theresa Owen: Wow, let's see. I have been in education for 27 years—oh my goodness, that makes me sound so old! I taught Business Education in North Alabama for the first 12 years and I have been a school counselor since then. I grew up in Lee County and actually graduated from Beauregard High School. My Bachelor's Degree in Business Education came from Auburn University (War Eagle!). After I started teaching, I completed my Master's Degree and 6th Year Degree (Double A, EdS, it has many

names) at Alabama A&M University and then obtained another Master's Degree in School Counseling from the University of West Alabama.

Kyle: Wow

Theresa Owen: I came back to Lee County in 2005 with my husband and son. My husband retired from Beulah High School in 2015 and now is the Headmaster at a private school. Our son is 20 years old and just completed his second year at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. He will be transferring to LaGrange College to complete his degree in Sports Management.

Kyle: wonderful

Theresa Owen: so in Auburn I was originally a pharmacy major and you know can I decided that I thought I was gonna be bored out of my mind if I was just counting pills and putting labels on bottles and I know there's a lot more to it but that's what it seems like to me once I got into it a little more you know

Keith: well if you want to if you want to get on the other side of the law it can be really exciting

Theresa Owen: of course the money would have been a lot better

Keith: plus less constraints on you as well

Theresa Owen: um but I sat with that Auburn University catalog and went A to Z and a lot of my family members are in education and so I just finally decided education is probably where I need to be definitely hasn't been boring sure man no two days are the same although sometimes that might be nice yeah but and no seriously I really enjoy working with kids and I just wanted to hopefully make a difference with some kids along the way and so that that's how I ended up in education I especially love high school students I've worked with all grade levels but I especially enjoyed high school I was just really exciting to see the kids make decisions and plans for their future

Keith: but what about when they make the wrong decision? or bad decisions?

Theresa Owen: well you know we do try to guide them, it is called guidance you do have some you know and then you have some that have some pretty lofty goals you know you always have those that want to be the professional football player basketball player and I always say that can be your first goal but let's have a back-up plan let's have a plan B just in case that doesn't work out um you know so that's the fun part and it's they're so naive at that age and so impressionable every day sometimes they don't listen too well, though.

Kyle: long as you've said it

Theresa Owen: that's right we put it out there um but I always tell my kids my two favorite days of the school year are awards Day and graduation I just I love to recognize students for their accomplishments and then to see them cross that graduation stage is just very nostalgic right but it's especially rewarding when I have a competitive class that likes to rack up that scholarship money cuz that's what I like new that's um cuz that's one of my favorite parts that working with high school students is helping them get scholarships yeah that's fantastic but my goal for all students and I tell them when they walk through those doors in that school you know my goal was for them to graduate from high school and be successful in life whatever direction that takes them and you know that's that's my goal for them I just

like them to know their options after high school you know college is great but a four year degree is not for everybody I'm a big advocate for career technical education and two-year degrees you know as you know excuse me that's where the money is these days especially in the Lee County area that's where the the most money can be been made um I actually taught at a Career and Technology Center so we had all of those technical programs on my campus and I taught business ed but we had welding and auto mechanics and carpentry and you know some of those other technical areas and so I saw firsthand those kids graduating and go into the local community college to further that technical degree and the money that they're making now is crazy

Keith: yeah, more than I'll ever see

Theresa Owen: That's right all of us with four year degrees right?!? but you know I also like to make sure that they know that the military is always an option you know and especially if they want to go to college later on down the road for little or no money those three is a great option and then there's always just going straight to work you know some of the kids say uh would not cross that graduation stage I'm done with the school no that's it but I like to caution them that they may think they're done with school they're not you know there's always gonna be training if they want to have upward mobility right or if they want to be you know have a good paycheck no they're gonna have to have some training it might not be a degree per se or college classes per se but

Kyle: some type of certification or something

Theresa Owen: that's right that's right exactly and you know sometimes that's done in the company and sometimes they'll send them out for that but you know you're gonna have to do something to further your skills if you're gonna you know have a successful career and I always tell people you know learning never stops doesn't matter how old you are I mean all three of us you know we're learning every day

Kyle: that's right

Keith: whether I want to or not

Theresa Owen: doesn't want to dig our heels in but um now here's an interesting last fact that I leave with you about my bio okay I have actually worked as a counselor in every attendance area in the Lee County school system really yeah I started out at Beaugard Elementary and Sanford middle school okay then counselor and then I moved to Beulah high school I was there for eight and a half years and then I went to Smith station freshman center in junior high for two years and then I actually asked to go to Loachapoka I'm to get back to working with high school kids and I just started here number three there Wow so it's been really fascinating yeah to grow up in Lee County and then get to work in all the different areas and you know people always say oh they're all so different and and they are in some respects but then in other respects they're very similar and the kids pretty much are all the same they're all a school they're attached to you right

Kyle: I this is a slightly off topic but I think that if every human being that had social media and used it thought that in that same way like people are gonna see what I post like I should really be considerate of the things not just bullying wise but just anything that goes right cuz I'm if you've been on social media lately but some of it is just junk just rottens like you know if you lived your life like the Stars you're bringing look at that you might be doing better

Theresa Owen: the world might be a little better right yeah yes kids just need to realize and sometimes they're just not mature enough to realize that you know that these things can come back to haunt them even when they're 30 or 40 years old right

Kyle: boy and so that sort of flows into my next question you know what is the difference between well these are just kids being kids right or a bullying event

Theresa Owen: right and that's that's hard you know that you have to really watch again that repeated pattern and is what you have to watch for but you know as you would expect or guess most reported bullying does happen in schools you know there's lots of kids together at one time so you know logically that would happen happens on the playground PE cafeteria the bus classrooms it doesn't matter and actually one in three students report that they have been bullied at school which to me is kind of alarming that's a lot um but you know if we think back probably all of us weren't sure maybe thought we were victims of bullying at some point you know through our years whether you know it may not have been true bullying but you know we kind of felt like we were the victim absolutely um but of course you know you have boys and I even don't exclude girls from this because you have some tomboys they're girls and they're gonna be rough when playing and but they're not necessarily intending to hurt anyone right so I think that's where you have to kind of look at and draw the line is you know they intended to hurt someone or they just you're a small scene you know being silly and of course if the roughhousing or the rough behavior is targeted at one person over and over or if they're intentionally again trying to hurt somebody then we might have a concern for bullying but otherwise let them be kids right you're only a kid once yes

Keith: a lot of times bullying takes different forms between the genders they don't bully themselves more physically bully each other more physically were the girls you know you know their hair and makeup and clothes well you know that's more you know it's more like social so

Theresa Owen: that's right right less physical than yeah than the boys the boys are typically you know Rumble and tumble and right they're done the girls sometimes I think the girls can have more of a lasting effect because you know those are things that tend to occur more often you know you're limited on the playground you know to a few minutes a day so you know you're pushing and shoving

Kyle: well and potentially less noticeable - yes black I like okay something happened but if the girls are constantly not letting someone be a part of their group it's about social exclusion that's hard harder to target

Keith: I guess we want to circle back a little bit to the cyber bullying thing because there have been some incidents where you know the kids are cyber bullying a kid yeah and to the point of suicide encouraging them what kind of protections are there or there any you know we found something like that happens what will what will happen to the students right and that kind of thing

Theresa Owen: and you know now we're starting to see a little more legal parameters and that you know especially because of some of the incidents we've read about you know heard about over the years but you know to me I don't know how we how a student can encourage a peer to commit that right but you know sometimes they think they're invincible or they think they won't do it and so I think that's where parents and friends and teachers have to really look out for everybody and that can be happening and us not even realize it which is the scary part you know because and which I think we'll

probably talk about that a little more as we get into you know some of the other you know how to prevent some of those types of questions but yeah I think that we definitely need to be cognizant of right

Keith: I think parents probably need to take a little more active role in monitoring their children yes most of devices and not as an invasion of privacy thing but as if you're suspecting something wrong I would think you need to learn before it's too late that's right for victim or instigator

Theresa Owen: right and you know this the situation's we've heard about it's been a repetitive thing it hasn't been just one timeline they've encouraged a student to kill themselves it's been you know constant text messaging or you know constant encouragement Kyle: and there's a there's a case that I can't remember the name of I'll have to look and see if we can add to the show notes or whatever but um there was a situation where a girl had been encouraging this boy and he went through it and I think the case came to fruition and they had some some legal I am so like there's a precedent now you know you know it's not just like hey you know maybe don't do that but like there's some legal precedent

Theresa Owen: yes I have heard that I think that's probably the most prevalent case that you know that's probably spearheaded to this and hopefully it you know kept some from right doing the same thing yeah I really had discouraged some people from engaging in those types of acts

Keith: that's right kids have always been mean but it's easier for them to be meaner

Theresa Owen: it is it is they can really behind that computer or that phone

Kyle: that's right yeah if you feel invincible when no one's around

Keith: people are tough behind that keyboard

Theresa Owen: that's right

Kyle: so what are some things that faculty members and other adults can look for

Theresa Owen: well you know the greatest group of children that are being bullied or those that are perceived as being different from others now I get a kick out of this because we're all different right from others and if we weren't the world would be a pretty boring place but unfortunately you know children get bullied for those differences and and they can be bullied for things like weight and that can be overweight or underweight they can be bullied for wearing glasses or being new to the school not being able to afford the cool things that the kids that suffer that's cool you can afford any of thousands of other reasons but kids may also be bullied if they are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves they have low self-esteem or if they don't get along well with others and sometimes maybe they're just seen as annoying or provoking or antagonistic toward others and they do it to get attention but just remember that the technical definition of bullying states that there's either a real or perceived power imbalance and those who bully others don't necessarily need to be bigger or stronger than those that they bully I've seen some of the smallest kids in the school like this bully but the power imbalance can come from popularity it can come from cognitive ability strength and most bullies think that they have social power and they like to dominate or they like to be in charge of others and you know statistics have shown that children who are aggressive or easily frustrated or have issues at home don't have much parental involvement have difficulty following rules or view violence in a positive way or more likely to bully others and that kind of makes sense when you think of sir those are the kids that we

would typically expect there's um you know it can be hard to identify bullying can be hard to identify not all children who are bullied will exhibit their so-called warning signs as we just talked about a second ago with the cyber world um and actually less than half the bullying incidents get reported to an adult and usually that's because the kid being bullied doesn't want to be seen as a tattletale we see that more in the younger kids um they fear backlash from the bully I think if they tell them the bullies' gonna come after them even harder yeah they think they can handle the situation on their own or they are too humiliated sometimes to repeat what's being said of for them even if it's not true right they're just embarrassed to repeat it um so some signs that we can look for that might indicate bullying is unexplainable injuries or they're coming home with lost or destroyed clothing or books or electronics they faked illness to avoid going to school we start seeing their grades decline they have a loss of interest in school decreased self-esteem we keep time coming back to that you know even patterning with that changes in eating or sleeping habits and then the of course more serious self-destructive behaviors like we're away from home harming themselves or certainly suicide sure or even talking about suicide um so I think you know kids can be mean and sometimes it seems that mean takes on a whole new level in middle school I worked with kids from kindergarten to twelfth grade and the meanest ones always seem to be in those middle school years and I guess you know it's because they're trying to find themselves or figure out where they fit in or Keith: just hitting puberty

Theresa Owen: hormones are off the chart

Kyle: god bless everyone who teaches seventh grade yeah I couldn't do it you know that we you said you prefer high school one of the things we've really found interesting at least I have found interesting so everyone hasn't a grade like at a level pre-k teachers could not be happier to teach those kids that are just getting care guard so everyone's got that level and knowledge so your

Keith: I only teach college

Theresa Owen: so your expectations are a little higher

Keith: well no my tolerance for the lower grades is way down

Kyle: I could do high school and I feel like I could do kid like the younger kids but seventh grade there's no way

Theresa Owen: yeah it was it's been interesting working from kindergarten to 12th grade because you know when I taught high school for 12 years and then when I went to elementary and I'm counseling kids about you know things that they've done and I'm using words and I'm looking at them going oh my gosh do they even know what that word means I felt like I needed a thesaurus in my hands at all times because you know sometimes you know their vocabulary isn't there so it's very hard to communicate they I agree with you Kyle I think that you're cut out for one grade level or another or it's a range of grades or another I don't think many people can do all of those grade levels well yeah they're at least they prefer a grade level to do

Keith: but the ones who do seventh grade are saints

Theresa Owen: they are they are those middle school kids with issue but you know usually by middle school they're starting to find their friends and you know they're constantly grouping and regrouping like we talked about a second ago you know one day you're included in this group and the next day

you're excluded from that group or you know the the Mean Girls have come out right and you know crazy enough technology is making it even harder for those middle school kids to understand what a real friendship is yeah yeah you know and then of course you know TV doesn't help um you know there's so much more bullying that happens in middle school and I'm specifically talking about grades 6 7 & 8 um you know then even in high school high school have to say there's more cyber bully middle school it's more of them the mean girl bullying or the physical bullying and that type of thing um you know in the media I think that often misused the word bullying sometimes they'll use bullying and it's a one-time fine right yeah and that's really not the correct term to use or even if somebody gets in a normal an argument there's a hole they're being bullied you know but again goes back to that definition of being repetitive when with intent to harm of course obviously they tend to harm but not that each other is what makes it that makes sense that makes sense to me right you know we talked we've talked a lot about cyberbullying but um that's probably the hardest type as we talked about a second ago to identify um you know of course if they're posting comments or rumors or pictures or videos well that's easy publicly excuse me that's easy to identify and especially if it's in a mean hurt for embarrassing way but also posing as someone else online we see a lot of that

Kyle: I mean that's interesting though like III that's one of the things I've never thought about like oh if I want to get back at Keith I'm gonna make a Keith account and say something silly

Keith: well a couple of shows that I watch they they're like they just did an episode about that touching I think was elementary one of them was elementary on CBS and the other one was a super girl um there was this girl she get it you know she gets in trouble because she's supposedly been doing like you know it was the TV generic snapchat it was a Betty call snapchat was like Oh ghost talk or whatever it was but this other girl had made the account posing as this other girl and was doing the bullying of this other kid and making the other girl take the fall for it and then the other girl the hoot girl who's being impersonated yeah doesn't want to go to the authorities for it because she doesn't want to get in trouble what the girl who's doing the impersonating Wow even though she likes the boy who's being bullied kind of deal

Kyle: that's just never never thought yeah

Keith: yeah just like two or three different shows just in the last month that I've watched have had is like that is sort of a zeitgeist II type of story I guess

Theresa Owen: and that's funny because you know that's been going on I don't know it's necessarily classify this as cyberbullying but back in Lee County when we first gave students email accounts we actually had at the school I was working at at the time the brother of one of our students he got on her account and sent a message about the complaint he had about the school principal and it looked like it was from the girl and we were just so surprised she's like the sweetest girl and he had actually gotten in her account and been able to send the email so it looked like it came from her so that's just you know going back in the day

Keith: wasn't there an incident when we were coming up where somebody had done something like that from they created an anonymous like hotmail account or something and sent some kind of crazy email or something

Kyle: I mean I've heard I'm sorry I've heard of that stuff before like making a generic where you don't know who it is but I just instead imagine air it's gonna be Keith now

Keith: we got it on tape now

Theresa Owen: so you know there's lots of things that go into that cyber you know as you can see but you know there are some we may see some warning signs that children are involved in in cyber bullying and that can be like significant increases or decreases of their device use course that's hard to determine because you know they all have that phone in their hand at all times but the child you know also exhibiting emotional responses to what is happening on their device you know so like when they read a comment or notice they oppose some outward assembly and write some kind of outward anger or you know whatever if you know you see the kid hiding their device or trying to cover up your screen when an adult or you know maybe even a peer is there somebody that they don't want to see it and then you know the one we see a lot is social media accounts being shut down or they're adding new accounts especially with those different screen name so if you start seeing a pattern of that it could be because they're being cyber bullied it could be just cuz they're trying to get around their parents but you know as we talked about before cyber bullying is probably less prevalent in middle school but more for it much more prevalent in high school yeah and I see that probably shifting you know now that we aren't fitting the device in their hand from the time they're born right probably that's gonna move on down in their school

Kyle: well that was one of my one of the thoughts when you said that was well not all seventh graders have convinced mommy and dad to get the phone right the time is your life yes

Theresa Owen: yeah the time is coming because you know I know we didn't let my child get one until he was in seventh grade you know I didn't think there was a need for him to have one before seventh grade but once he gotten done you know he was at the high school he was going on trips and you know they're one third of all team or you know you felt like you needed a way to contact us but the crazy thing is I actually have read in some studies where some online harassment begins as early as fourth grade so that tells you right there that some of the kids are using it and it's starting to bully even cyber bully at the age of fourth grade that's so young

Keith: I'd hate to be a kid these days

Kyle: well you know we've had that conversation on the podcast several times but it is a different world

Theresa Owen: they just faced with so many more challenges and decisions that we had to make right you know our lives were so easy right huh but you know and just talking about all this cyber bullying to me it just proves that really no age group escapes it wrong and that even goes for adults the adults on social media

Keith: thought that I had a minute ago was so is the creating an account impersonating someone else for nefarious means is that is that considered a form of bullying of that person is being impersonated

Theresa Owen: in my opinion what whatever my expertise is not always um no I think if they're doing it if you're doing it just to keep mom and dad from you know see in their business probably not

Keith: but if Kyle creates his fake account impersonating me yes and he's bullying me

Theresa Owen: right and especially if he's creating himself as you and she's sending me you know ugly messages like you know

Keith: "I hate you Theresa Owen, signed Keith Claridy"

Theresa Owen: is bullying because now of course I've gone to my parents and said Keith's bullying me and then are you in that scenario I'm bullying both of you right right

Keith: so it's a bogo on the bullying

Theresa Owen: they can get twisted and you know very involved and you can imagine from us at the school level trying to combat that and you know even I would think at the the level of the law you know if you start if you were really bullying me threats and

Keith: It's him (meaning Kyle) doing it, not me! Lee County Sheriff shows up at my door, "sir, are you bullying Theresa Owen?" "It's not me, I swear! It's Kyle!" So back on track if a faculty member it identifies bullying behavior on either side if they identify somebody who's being a victim of it or somebody who's being a perpetrator of it what should a faculty member do

Theresa Owen: well I think we just all have to be vigilant we have to look out for those signs that we've talked about um we also have to watch out for kids that assist or reinforce the bullying behavior so kids might not actually be being the bully but they're encouraging that behavior or joining in occasionally or even given the bully an audience and you know by laughing or providing support to the bully so we have to especially as educators we have to be very aware of that and we we need to deal with it immediately we need to you know address that right then we don't need to let it rock on and then if it's something that's kind of out of our scope is it and I'm kind of speaking from a teacher's perspective is they're the ones that would typically see it more so than probably any other school officials on a day to day basis all right um then they need to report that to administration so that we can deal with it cuz you know Lee County actually has a policy about sexual harassment or harassment in general and bullying and so you know we don't we take that pretty seriously at the school level we even have forms that the kids can fill out or you know I guess an adult could fill it out a teacher if they wanted to but you know typically the teachers are just um kind of you know send an email or you know go to the principal and say hey look you know I think this is going on and we might need to check into it um I think when we talked about cyber bullying to me that in we kind of it kind of goes back to what we talked about earlier but I think the parents have to take the most proactive approach and role in cyber bullying you know they're likely the ones that are paying those cell phone bills or internet bills and they need to be aware of what their kids are doing with those devices and you know as I said earlier it's okay to be in their business well that's your child

Kyle: you need to be in their business if they're in your house

Theresa Owen: exactly right he said we need to know what they're posting online we need to know what they're viewing online um too many parents want to give their children privacy and kids are not socially developed enough to have that kind of freedom and parents need to have open and ongoing conversations with children about cyberbullying digital behavior what's appropriate what's not appropriate you know other things that a parent can do and even us as educators because now at Loachapoka we're going to a one-to-one initiative so we're gonna have kids walking the halls with a device in their hand that's right all day long and so we've got to really be cognizant of what are they

doing with those devices and of course you know ninety percent of them have cell phones as it is you know rock in the halls um you know and that's a little harder to police cuz they're really slick with you know hide it in their pocket real quick or you know they're quick to send a text message when they're in the bathroom or post something on social media and I know you know have all kinds of filters and you know things that we try to block it

Kyle: yeah yeah within our network we absolutely do and one of the points I was gonna make what you said a minute ago most of the major cell phone providers have where you can set up different rules for your children it'll flag you for certain things and really make you a part of what they're viewing on their phone it's already high tech well it is but if I think that any parent who is interested could go to their provider and say hey I have a seventh grader for instance and I'm interested in knowing what their what they're looking at and and they can work with you and so and if we can get some information well

Theresa Owen: cuz I think parents you know technology is moving so fast parents can't keep up and like we said earlier you know these teenagers are keeping up not the parents you know so things are out there before their parents even realize it and so the more we can do to educate them about what they can do to try to you know curb some of this those right you know it's better um you know other suggestions that I would have for parents are of course staying up-to-date you know the latest apps are trying to roast as you can tell it is but you know they also need to follow or friend their child and if their child you might have to be sneaky about it you may have to get your friend to friend your child right yeah absolutely

Keith: or create an account impersonating someone!!

Theresa Owen: you know check their make sure that their phone location and privacy settings are set phone location especially that really doesn't need to be home for any child there's too many predators today um I think right now it's just I wouldn't say new because I've been around forever hey Ronnie you know it's still kind of relatively a new process and not a name charted Turin yes right they're just kind of feeling their way through the waters and and realizing what can get them in big trouble and you know what they don't need to do again I think that is the biggest challenge that we deal with in schools is maybe just constantly educate right

Kyle: so being at the high school you know you obviously get kids from the elementary and so my question is what are some of the long-term effects on either side of bullying because you know you don't have full control of everyone that you're gonna get yeah I'm saying so what are some of the we're some of the long-term effects like I said only there's a bully inside

Theresa Owen: right right because there's certainly different effects for both and ironically some of the same effects for both but um there's some long-term effects and those that are bullies and those that are bullied are at more risk for negative outcomes sure down the road yeah I know it could be depression it could be substance abuse could even be suicidal ideation although that's not as prevalent as the others um but kids who are true beliefs oftentimes they're gonna require some support to change that behavior you know if they've been a bully for years they're gonna need some help to get out of that rut and then that pattern but an adulthood we see that those kids are more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs have criminal convictions be abusive towards their spouses or children or people in general continuing to be a bully right the sad thing is that they're at a much higher of dropping out of school and we all know that that leads to even bigger problems down the road you know find an employment ring

full employment Road positively contributing to society but on the flip side those kids who are bullied may need help learn how to respond to that bullying and how to process that bullying that has happened so they may need some counseling to learn some effective coping strategies and these are the kids that you see that are might have lower academic achievement they might not participate in many school events or you know sports teams and things that may just kind of be withdrawn they are probably more at risk of missing or skipping school dropping out to some degree but probably just missing school just not wanting to deal with it as adults you see those that are have been bullied dealing with that depression anxiety feelings of loneliness sadness a lot of times they have more health complaints of course going back to cyberbullying you know digital devices offer us the ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day seven days a week so it's much more difficult for kids to find relief from cyberbullying rather than traditional bullying as we you know I guess term it um but cyberbullying it can be relentless it can increase the likelihood of anxiety and depression can have some long-term mental health effects and you know sadly some teens have succumbed to the cyberbullying pressure to end their lives and you know we've heard about those instances and again it's just as unfathomable to me that kids would encourage their peers to engage in that but you know those are some of the long-term effects I mean there's many many more you know we probably will never even know some of the effects of bullying or being bullied into me probably being bullied would be though you'd have more effects from being really then be in the bully although there are some effects on both sides

Kyle: right if someone is if someone has been bullied where someone has seen someone beep already what are the steps that they should take well what should they do

Theresa Owen: they definitely need to report it the best number one

Keith: to whom would be the best person to report it

Theresa Owen: well you know if it's a student reporting it then they need to report and I always tell my kids this when you know they come in my office and they're complaining about you know something somebody's done that or they've seen something you need to report it and it's usually something that's been done to them where was the adult where was the nearest adult why didn't you report it to the nearest adult because you know if you're two hallways away and then you come all the way to my office to report it they could have right you have a lot of opportunities but the biggest one is that one that was standing right there in the room with you that could have handled it right then nipped it in the bud but it's not do it and moved on um and I don't mind handling things but they need to know that you know it's not okay to pass by you know ten people to go report it to the one you think you should report it to right again going back to educating them about are they get being a tattletale or they reporting something that really needs to be recorded and you know if it's something oh I don't like your shoes you know that's not reportable that is tattling you know he said he didn't like my shoes you know you get all upset and you know I used to joke with my high school kids when I was a teacher but way back in the day um you know I'd have kids that were upset because somebody would make fun of their clothes or their shoes or you know made some off-the-wall comment to them and I number one I'd encourage them to ignore it but I said you know if you really want to get them just come with up with a clever comeback and you know say something like I'm sorry that you feel you have to pick on me because you don't feel good about yourself and so then that kind of leaves the bully going or the boy I guess we turn

Billy right there going huh and of course you know yeah but stand up for yourself stand up for yourself that's right

Keith: when was a kid I played football when I was a little kid and one year there was this there is this kid on the team he was the quarterback and you know I've always been not skinny and so he would be making fun of me for whatever and that hasn't that hadn't happened to be a whole lot so I was kind of like didn't know how to handle it and it was kind of cheese in me off and so I was talking to mom about it and she's like well she goes you're on the offensive line you're supposed to be one of the guys who protect them she goes you got a scrimmage game against the one of the other teams and this team was known for having like the biggest guys on their line right all of the kids that they picked for the huge kid like you know like eight years old was big high and so on since the scrimmage game it doesn't really matter she goes just don't block for we're down set hut and I stand up and I step back and I move out of the way that defensive line pour through and I explained to him he goes so I would encourage that was what I'm saying that there are there are other ways to send up there ourselves there are

Theresa Owen: some times when we laugh and joke about middle school but we see a lot of times conflict resolution and peer mediation stress geez being implemented and middle school yeah you know we try to empower them I guess if you will to solve their own problems or suggest things that might work so that can be helpful hmm the only other thing I wanted to mention was that we haven't really touched on is the gaming online and you know we have so many kids that hey play against people from all over you know not just local and I was alarmed at the statistics that say 72 percent of all teenagers game online oh my gosh um but to me that's a staggering percentage but then it doesn't surprise me because again we're giving kids an advice from learns practically so you know they've got a device in their hand and they're looking for ways to entertain themselves but you know teens need to be really cautious when playing well anybody if not there's teenagers I have my sister has triplets and they're gonna be in 4th grade next year and they just have to be cautious because again you know so many people play anonymously or they use avatars and they you know create alter egos or they hide behind false versions of themselves and so I think to reduce the possibility of cyber bullying through the gaming aspect parents need to limit the amount of time that children are exposed to those devices

Kyle: well let me share this with you because this might be information you don't know very very recently the Alabama High School Athletics Association has greenlit online gaming as part of that you can do it in a school and so we had a school at one of Lee County Schools contact us very recently to see about creating a what is called a league of Legends team which is the online and so this is school time and after hours used for in that environment

Theresa Owen: Wow so it's like a sport

Kyle: it's called eSport a sporty story Wow and so you would have eventually one team let's say beulah for instance that they're in the same circuit that the high school football team goes right you know they might be playing against Jefferson County Wow and so and that's starting this year well we are doing some testings and their early testing because there's lots of considerations and stuff but just talking about us digitally moving into that arena more officially than just I'm going to check my phone and play a good game and my off time but we're gonna be doing that mainstream

Theresa Owen: yeah that's gonna throw some twisting things

Kyle: it will but I think that really is just the punctuation on the sentence that is we need to be making good decisions as digital citizen as a whole yes and as we continue to grow and as things continue to evolve and it's not just a one-to-one environment but we've got online situations where they're interacting with other students that other school you know that really amps it up having that good foundation and knowing how to act in those situations

Theresa Owen: is so much more important yes yes that's eye opening guys back to what I said at the beginning learn something new

Keith: so I was wrapping up and wonderful information about anis and is one of the goals of this podcast is to we'll have a subject but I want to get on very perfect I loved it but so as we're wrapping up just to bring it back to a lighter subject so you you've been in education for many years you've been in all four service areas here in the county so what's the most awesome thing that you've been experienced that you've had or awesome thing that you've been a part of in your time at Lee County

Theresa Owen: oh my goodness that's a loaded question I specifically remember in business education when I was teaching I thought it was very important for all people to know how to tie tie because they were gonna go in job interviews and so my husband has thousands of ties and I would always pick up you know something ratty ones kids hands touching all over and I bring them to school and we I would have a lesson on teaching them to tie ties and whether it was boys and girls they both had to do it and there's one little boy who can not die to save his life and so I put him in my office which was next door to my car screen and I said don't come out until you do you learn how to tie this time and you know of course that was joking right and I don't even honestly remember saying that to him but several years down the road I got the nicest box of gift wrapping paper and bows and ribbons and things and he wrote me a note and he was working for a paper product plan and he said I just want you to know what an impression you made on me and I remember the day you locked me in your office because I have to work to have something good it will help them in life

Kyle: well we are both very very fortunate to have you on our podcast today

Keith: wonderful conversation preparation you

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