

Galion teen tells her story of assault

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Teens Maddie Hoffman (right) and Jamie Carter hug after both told their riveting stories of being bullied by other teens at their school.

Kimberly Gasuras | Galion Inquirer



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Galion teen Maddie Hoffman tells her harrowing story of bullying and being assaulted by other teens while being videotaped in March during a benefit for her on Sunday at the Galion Municipal Airport.

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Facts about bullying:

* Approximately 160,000 teens reportedly skip school every day because they are bullied.

The airline hangar at Galion Municipal Airport during the Support4Maddie Ride and Rally event on Sunday was silent as Maddie Hoffman took her place at the podium to tell her story about a fight that left her body and spirit broken.

The 16-year-old was videotaped while fighting with three other teen girls at a Galion residence in March. Maddie was later taken to Nationwide Children's Hospital with a torn liver, torn spleen, and neck and head injuries. Three teen girls are awaiting court hearings in Crawford County Juvenile Court on felonious assault charges. The video tape of the girls' fight was placed on social media and showed several teens yelling and cheering as Hoffman was kicked and punched repeatedly, while lying on the ground.

To fully understand Hoffman's story, her best friend Jamie Carter took to the podium first

2:36 pm EDT

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- Yes
- No
- I have no opinion / I did not watch

Next



* One in 10 teens drop out of school due to repeated bullying.

* 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys report being bullied either in school or online.

* 75 percent of school shootings have been linked to harassment and bullying against the shooter.

Source: nobullying.com

to tell the back story.

The pair became friends during their sophomore year when Carter was told by a lunch attendant that she could not eat her lunch if she didn't remove her jacket.

"Maddie grabbed my hand and took me to

the bathroom. I explained that I didn't want to take my jacket off because I did not want my scars to show," said Carter, who had been cutting her arms, the result of being bullied by classmates.

Carter said Hoffman gave her a long-sleeve shirt to wear so she could eat lunch.

"We have been friends ever since," Carter said.

Carter said the bullying became so bad at school that she ultimately took pills in an attempt to commit suicide.

"I didn't tell an adult about the bullying but I should have," Carter said.

Hoffman said a kid at her school, Galion High School, posted a Facebook status about her and her best friends.

"There was a lot of arguing going on in the comments section of the post. There were over 300 comments," Hoffman said.

Hoffman said she and one of the girls that fought with her on that day in March had a long-standing feud.

"It started over a boy but when the boy was out of the picture, we still didn't like each other. Actually, we hated each other," Hoffman said.

Hoffman said the two engaged in an argument on the Facebook post and agreed to meet the following Saturday to fight.

"But the next day at school, the same kid that posted the status on Facebook, threw a slushy at me and my friends during lunch. We went to the bathroom and Janet (Lugo) and her friends came in," Hoffman said. "That is when I found out that one of my best friends, Jamie (Carter) had tried to commit suicide the night before because of the teasing and bullying from Janet and her friends."

Hoffman said the two girls agreed to fight that day after school so she headed to Colby Park but no one showed up. She then went to a house where Lugo was to meet her to fight.



Hoffman said when the girl showed up, she wasn't alone.

"She brought two girls I didn't know," Hoffman said.

Hoffman said she and the girls began to fight with the girls kicking her repeatedly.

"My neurologist at Children's Hospital said one more kick would have broken my neck and I would not be able to walk again," Hoffman said.

Hoffman said as she lay on the ground for what seemed like a long time, other teens present at the fight took photos of her.

Hoffman said she drove herself home and her mom was asleep on the couch.

"I didn't want to tell her what had happened," Hoffman said.

It wasn't long before her mom asked if she was okay, having heard about the fight. Hoffman's sister then yelled for her mom to come to the computer at their home. She played the video of the fight that had been posted online.

"My mom insisted that we take the video to the police. Someone had already turned in a copy to them," Hoffman said.

Hoffman's mom, Bri McCullough, took her daughter to the emergency department at Galion Hospital where it was determined she had a torn liver and needed to be sent to Children's Hospital where her other injuries were later discovered.

"The love, support and prayers from so many people helped get me through," said Hoffman who had to wear a neck brace for a month and is still dealing with pain from the injuries she sustained that day.

Hoffman said she should have told her parents about the bullying.

"Staying silent is not a solution. Janet and I should have handled our differences in a better way," Hoffman said. "We all need to learn to build each other up, not tear each other down."

Ashli White came to the event to support Hoffman and also spoke about bullying.

"It is important that we all have a good support system within our communities," White said.

McCullough said the situation has been hard on her as a mother.

"I have experienced every emotion there is. Maddison finished this school year at home but is planning to head back to school next year," McCullough said. "I am very proud of Madison for not letting the negative



of this situation prevail but instead, to use this as a way to bring awareness to bullying. Bullying has to stop but one person cannot do it. It will take law enforcement, schools and parents working together to stop this.”

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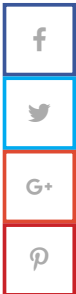
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