

At an early age, Audrey Newsome had a deep secret to keep from her family.

Her dad was driving home when he witnessed his daughter being chased by three to four bullies.

"I was so ashamed that I was being bullied I never told my parents," Newsome said.

Newsome's dad chased the children away and wanted an explanation for what was going on.

"I had to come clean," Newsome said, "and tell him what had been happening for a long, long time."

Her dad was shocked, angry, and told Newsome to go back and fight the bullies.

"I did listen to him," Newsome said, "I went back to school and I actually picked out the one who was leading the pack and started fighting with them, but then what that did was turn me into a bully."

Her dad wanted her to stand up for herself, but not do what others were doing to her.

Although she kept the matter from her family, they were supportive when they found out. Her dad told her she was a good person and some children were just mean.

The bullying began in third grade and ended around Newsome's middle school years. The bullies would chase her, call

her names, throw rocks, and hit her because her size was different from others. Newsome said she felt like less than a human being, confused, and did not understand why other children wanted to hurt her.

She said she never understood that she was overweight because her family never treated her differently from anyone else. Bullying made her want to alienate herself, and she was scared that others would start calling her names too.

"It really took its toll," Newsome said. "I was embarrassed. I didn't want other people to know others were calling me fat.

"I didn't see anything wrong with my size until they started calling me names."

Once Newsome realized fighting back would get the bullies to leave her alone, it built her self-esteem.

"I was so relieved to get them off of me," Newsome said. "It really made me feel good about what I was doing."

She did not realize that she was doing exactly what had been done to her. She just knew that she was no longer scared or being bullied.

While on the playground, Newsome hit another child in the face with a ball because the child made a remark about her weight. When the child started crying after being hit, that is when she realized what she was doing.

"I was like, wow. I just did that and the same kind of stuff was done to me, and I didn't like it," Newsome said. "It made me feel bad."

Although it made her feel bad, she did not stop bullying. She did not want to lose the power it gave her and was scared that she would go back to being the victim.

In middle school, Newsome finally came to her senses about how serious the bullying was getting. While fighting with a boy, he hit her in the back of the head with a brick. She said she still has the knot on her head to this day.

"That stopped me from bullying," Newsome said. "That one incident single handedly stopped me from bullying."

Newsome said being a bully was not all it was cracked up to be, and if she did not like it being done to her, she did not need to be doing it to others.

After college, Newsome joined the Marine Corps and then returned to school. She put the bullying out of her mind until her sister brought up the subject one night. Newsome denied being bullied, but was reminded of that time in her life by her sister.

From then on she knew she wanted to do something with bullying but did not know what. She started her own leadership business in which her employees were required to do community service. One of her employees volunteered at an organization

called Youth First Texas, where bullied children had contemplated suicide.

Newsome went to visit the children which led her to create her own anti-bullying organization, The Bully-Suicide Project.

"I think it is so hard to get an organization to take hold," Newsome said, "because there's so many of them."

Although there are many anti-bullying organizations in many communities, Newsome's ambition and drive to make a successful impact are evident.

Gladys Barbosa and Mary Barclay, seniors at Townview Magnet Center, collaborated with Newsome on their senior thesis, which focused on bullying.

"She's actually looking for kind of a new perspective to an anti-bullying campaign which focuses more on student led rather than having the teachers and the parents get involved," Barbosa said. "It's all about focusing on the good things the students can do for each other, which I think is a really, really cool concept."

Newsome said she wants to do something different and revolutionary with this project, and although she is starting out locally in the Dallas area, she wants to spread her organization to a national and global level.

She wants to eventually have a student-led anti-bullying campaign on every high school campus in the country.

"Just like every school has a student government," Newsome said, "why can't you have an anti-bullying organization to address the issue on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, not just once a year?"

As far as internationally, Newsome said she has contacts in Africa, England, Australia and Norway that are interested in working with her and spreading the word about her organization.

"It has to be an international initiative. It has to be everybody is on the same page," Newsome said. "Not just an awareness campaign, but a movement. That's our goal."

Newsome's kindness and passion shine throughout her collaborations with others and her willingness to always help.

After meeting seniors Gladys Barbosa and Mary Barclay, she was diagnosed with pneumonia but still got permission from her doctor to go and judge the girls' senior thesis project.

"She really takes into account everything that we have to offer," Barbosa said.

Both girls said they hope to have more opportunities to work with Newsome.

"She wants us to be the ones to help her implement her ideas into other schools around Texas," Barclay said.

Upon meeting her, Barbosa said Newsome was really sweet, bright, uplifting and friendly.

Barclay could tell Newsome was dedicated and wanted to get others on board with her project just by her personality. Rather than shaking her hand when meeting, Barclay said the first thing Newsome did was hug her.

"You could tell she was just so passionate about the topic," Barclay said, "especially because she had experienced it and she loves talking about it and she just loves the idea that we can help to defeat bullying."

Barbosa said it is really amazing that she and Barclay have had the opportunity to work with Newsome and that her story is really inspiring.

"She's now like a successful CEO and it just goes to show that you can get out of the rut you're in," Barbosa said, "even if you feel like it's impossible."

Sidebar:

Audrey Newsome's organization, The Bully-Suicide Project, uses workshops, rallies and conferences to get the message out to others.

Within her project, Newsome has several different programs to help reach out to the community.

A Day of Hope includes going to a junior high or high school and starting out with an assembly about bullying along with a segment about suicide.

"We want it to be serious and we want them to listen, but have to do so gently," Newsome said. "You have to get that subject in so students are aware that bullying can lead to suicide."

There are workshops for teachers and parents as well, and at the end, everyone comes together to understand how they can help each other from what they learned.

Generally an organization comes in and has an assembly, talks at the students and tells them what to do, Newsome said, then they go away and will not be seen for another year.

Another program of hers includes the student athlete program, attempting to make students a part of the solution process. She believes incorporating students will help with the issue.

Newsome said students who have peer education programs listen more to students rather than adults.

"Our concept is if students listen more to students, then have students lead the anti-bullying campaign," Newsome said, "and maybe the students will listen and give solutions to put into place to stop bullying because no one has done that yet."

Author:

Dalila Kettrey - dalila.kettrey@ttu.edu

News 5 Sources:

Savita Abrahams - 817-917-5511

mail@savitaabrahamsphd.com

Victoria Garza - 956-605-1993

Ron Miller

Brenda High - 509-547-1052

Brenda@jaredstory.com

Research:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.lib->

[e2.lib.ttu.edu/science/article/pii/S0140197112001819](http://www.sciencedirect.com.lib-e2.lib.ttu.edu/science/article/pii/S0140197112001819)

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011002.pdf>

<http://ehis.ebscohost.com.lib->

[e2.lib.ttu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=83c72704-6e76-42f0-](http://ehis.ebscohost.com.lib-e2.lib.ttu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=83c72704-6e76-42f0-)

[b279-6c7fea23c119%40sessionmgr15&vid=3&hid=106](http://ehis.ebscohost.com.lib-b279-6c7fea23c119%40sessionmgr15&vid=3&hid=106)

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/MetLIfe->

[Compendium.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/MetLIfe-Compendium.pdf)

News 6 Sources:

Audrey Newsome - 469-443-6197

draudreynewsome@gmail.com

Mary Barclay - 214-707-6678

Gladys Barbosa - thehighschoolsurvivalguide@gmail.com