

EDUCATION

BMX legend issues challenge

Shred Hate campaign aims to banish bullying

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As far as ESPN, X Games and Pueblo City Schools (D60) are concerned, it's time to banish the bullies and shred the hate.

Wednesday, students at East High School, Risley Academy of Innovation and Heaton Middle School were treated to a visit from X Games BMX vert and big air legend Kevin Robinson, who enthusiastically introduced the X Games Shred Hate campaign, an initiative to reduce bullying in schools.

A collaboration between ESPN and the No Bully organization, the program provides schools with an enriched bullying-prevention curriculum to ensure a safe learning environment for all students.

Robinson, an X Games multigold medalist and world record holder for the long distance backflip, was a (literal) high-flying hit in the Risley gymnasium, energizing the middle schoolers with an array of vital life lessons.

And one really nifty bunny hop over five teachers.

Wiry and animated, Robinson — himself a childhood victim of bullying who came from meager beginnings — challenged his Risley audience to live a life based on respect for others, “treating others the way you want to be treated.”

Even when to do so is very difficult, he said.

To illustrate that point, Robinson told of crossing paths at one of his professional BMX contests with a middle school classmate who made his young life hellish through constant bullying.

“I hear, ‘Kevin, Kevin!’ And it’s that same boy that used to make fun of me,” Robinson said. “And



CHIEFTAIN PHOTOS/JOHN JAQUES

Kevin Robinson, a professional X Games athlete, bunny hops his bike over five Risley Academy of Innovation teachers during a performance Wednesday as part of a \$2 million prevention grant to Pueblo City Schools (D60) from No Bully.



Robinson talks to Risley students and staff, encouraging them to work together and banish bullying.

I got that same pit in my stomach, even though I’m now a grown adult and a black belt.

“And I got angry.”

Taking the high road, Robinson gained his composure and offered his hand to the onetime nemesis — who had the nerve to ask him for a

backstage pass so the two could “hang out.”

Said Robinson, “Do you think I gave him the pass? Of course I did. Because I don’t want him

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to remember me the way I remember him. Every time I see him, I think of somebody mean.

“Every time he sees me I want him to remember me for doing something nice.”

Just as he did, Robinson challenged the students “to be the one to make the change. You’ve got to be the person to step up and make that change. Sometimes it’s hard, but you’ve got to be the bigger person.”

Combating bullying, Robinson continued, takes a team effort. He encouraged the students to never give a bully an audience but to rely on a

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team effort “to get each other to treat each other kind. We have to work together, as a team, everyone. You’re all a team of the school. You’re also a team of the town. You’re also a team of Colorado.

“So work together.”

Robinson punctuated his team spirit point in a bit of extreme fashion. Inviting five teachers to lie down in the middle of the gym floor, he proceeded to clear the quintet, via a bunny hop, on a BMX bike — only after soliciting raucous encouragement from his enthralled viewers in a show of trust.

Wrapping up his well-received presentation, Robinson said, “Please, I beg you. Every day, work as hard as you

can to be the best version of yourself as you can be.”

Robinson’s appearance coincides with the selection of D60 to receive a prevention grant from No Bully in the amount of \$2.1 million over three years. The funds will be used to install the program into a cluster of D60 schools.

The grant, which will formally be presented to the D60 board of education on Tuesday, will be used to build and reinforce a bully-free culture that supports students in their social, emotional and academic growth through implementation of the evidence-based No Bully System.

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