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# Back to School

## "Leave My Kid Alone!"

Studies have indicated that up to 30% of students in the U.S. are involved in bullying- either as the person inflicting harm on another student, or as the victim. With nearly 1/3 of our students affected, bullying is the most common act of violence in our society.

One proactive response to this problem is the Actively Caring for People Movement, initiated by Dr. E. Scott Geller and his students at Virginia Tech University.

Many of us recall learning of the April 16th tragedy at Virginia Tech, when a young man who had himself been bullied since elementary school, shot and killed 32 people, and injured many more. Following this, Dr. Geller and Virginia Tech students created an intervention to deter bullying and reward acts of kindness. In this intervention, when someone sees another person doing something kind for someone else they provide recognition with a green wristband. Research done by AC4P (Actively Caring for People) shows an overall increase in positive social behavior and decreases in bullying behavior among elementary and middle school students, when this program is implemented. Clearly there is effectiveness in this positive-proactive approach.

The way this is implemented in elementary schools is for students to mindfully pay attention to seek out *Actively Caring* incidents; any act that goes above and beyond to help other people at school. When observed, students write caring stories on a card about what they experienced or saw. The teacher reads a few of these stories to start the school day and then chooses the kind student and the observer of the kind act to each wear an *Actively Caring* wristband that day. Finally, each student in the class will have worn the wristband once, and then everyone in the class will get a band to wear permanently. Those who started AC4P believe that the proactive intervention can increase the ability to actively care. They believe this will significantly increase the mere ¼ of fourth and fifth graders who say they "often" or "almost always" stop bullying when they see it.

## Actively Caring for People

Actively Caring for People has expanded beyond schools and has become a large-scale movement establishing a more charitable, interconnected, and mutually respectful culture for businesses, organizations, universities and even entire communities. The initiative to encourage people to actively care, inspires employees, neighbors, co-workers, and peers to perform intentional acts of kindness consistently, as part of their daily routine. These helpful exchanges and the positive recognition for them have a mutually reinforcing benefit, which leads to an actively caring culture.

Currently, another full-scale bullying study measures the behavior and attitude changes in diverse groups of schools from Virginia to California in a range of income levels, both private and public. The latest to join the movement is Texas A&M Central Texas. If you have interest in the program, please contact Shane, [smac@vt.edu](mailto:smac@vt.edu) to learn more about how to participate.

For more information on Actively Caring for People, to order wristbands for yourself, your school, or organization, go to: [www.ac4p.org](http://www.ac4p.org).

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