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Speaker uses motivational magic to build self esteem in kids

BATTLING BULLIES

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Students at Rendell Park elementary school learned to care for each other this past Thursday, and how to avoid and dissolve bullying situations.

Magician and speaker Steve Harmer entertained about 400 students with games, interactive demonstrations and humour. Harmer is a former principal and teacher from Calgary. He has always used magic in his teaching methods, but four years ago Harmer developed a program to take around the province. It went so well, he took a leave of absence from his position in Calgary, and eventually resigned. He has been to more than 780 schools in Alberta.

To keep the attention of students, he rode a unicycle, balanced boxes on a single finger, made new words out of random spelling cards and through it all managed to instill some positive messages in the minds of students.

"The overall mission is to offer encouragement and hope to kids," said Harmer. "One of the key messages is to get the kids as strong as they can be and build up their self-esteem so they become confident. I want them to be the best people they can be, have a good network of friends and care for each other. I tell the kids to have the confidence to step up as a group and say 'we aren't going to take this' when bullying situations arise. It's all about empowering kids."

Harmer said the influence of parents at home is paramount in developing or dissolving bully attitudes. He said his presentations usually open up conversations at school, and from there teachers are able to take the concepts and expand on them.

"The influence at home is huge," said Harmer. "I believe the home is the primary school for kids, so if



PHOTO BY IAN ROSS

Magician and speaker Steve Harmer interacts with children at Rendell Park elementary school this past Thursday.

you've got a dad who's telling his son to 'go knock his head off,' he's going to be a primary influence for adding to a bully situation. A good school will have a parent component to them, and the school and parents will be speaking the same language to the students."

Harmer also presented at Martin Browne and Jack Kemp elementary schools this past Friday, and will be back in the Border City in April to speak to students in the Catholic division.