

Future WAVE works to BULLYPROOF youth

by Craig Smith in The New Mexican, 1996

For just about everyone, growing up has probably meant dealing with a bully at one point or another - and perhaps continuing to deal with those uncomfortable memories as an adult.

But Santa Fe nonprofit organization Future WAVE (Working for Alternatives to Violence Through Entertainment) has a unique answer: a 10-step violence-prevention program built around the acronym BULLYPROOF.

The word represents 10 shields made by Muscogee (Creek) medicine woman Shona Bear, each of which spells out a special spirit characteristic of a bear, a unicorn, a lynx, a lion, a yak, a porpoise, a raven, an otter, an owl and a fox.

"It has a proven track record of teaching children conflict resolution skills using drama, puppetry and other creative approaches," Future WAVE founder and President Arthur Kanegis said.

Designed as a "rap 'n' roll opera" for teens and a puppet show for elementary school children, a new production of The Legend of the Bullyproof Shields takes stage at the Armory for the Arts this week. Actors include participants in Santa Fe Performing Arts, Aztec Street Theater and Future WAVE.

"This is the premiere gala grand opening, the first performance in Santa Fe," Kanegis said. "And Sam Leyba and the kids he's working with, the teens, have rewritten the play to incorporate their own experience."

Leyba, who is co-directing the play with Wayne Sabato, agreed. "Of the 12 friends I grew up with, eight are dead and two are locked up. I can't go back to save them, so I'm doing this play to help other young people learn a other way to live their lives."

BULLYPROOF draws from what Kanegis identifies as "native roots and cutting-edge technologies of the future" to help educate children in alternatives to violence. "From making shields, masks and puppets, to drumming, dancing, role playing, story telling and performing, the kids have the time of their life," Kanegis said.

The puppet show for elementary school children originally was developed and tested at Wood Gormley Elementary School and later was endorsed by Dr. Pat Weaver, associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Santa Fe Public School system.

"Bullyproofing allows young people to draw on their innate qualities of humor, innocence and fearlessness ... to enhance their security and ability to stand up in the world," Kanegis said. "It is a fun and entertaining way of teaching young people how to defuse threatening situations."

For more information on Future WAVE and its activities, or to volunteer email info@bullyproof.org