

# Shore News Today

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## Using music to silence the bullies

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Suzanne Marino



NORTHFIELD – Susan Goodman is a professional musician and a mom who turned the fun songs she would sing for her sons and their adventures into a lucrative career in children’s music.

While that success has earned her accolades and sales in excess of 60,000 units at Zany Brainy and Discovery Toys, it is her work as an advocate against bias and bullying that is striking a chord in school districts across New Jersey and in Philadelphia.

After earning a degree in political science Goodman enrolled at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey in the Holocaust and genocide studies program. Her final project on prejudice and the Holocaust, Goodman used her music to start a conversation on bias, racism, moral education and prejudice reduction.

“It was during my courses that I found I could write about almost anything,” said Goodman. “This became my medium where my passion for social justice and music came together.”

Her goal is not simply to point out the harm bullying does to children and their ability to learn, she also wants to teach about ally building, bias awareness and empower and give a voice to the bystanders.

“I tell the kids that I speak to that really there are few real bullies, but there are a great many bystanders just watching. The bystanders’ silence is a weapon that allows the bullying to continue,” said Goodman.

“We talk about the difference between speaking up and snitching and let them know it is not the same thing. We talk about courage and compassion. It takes courage to open up and understand the differences between people.”

Goodman’s first-hand knowledge of bias and bullying hit home when both of her sons were bullied; her older son Dylan, now 23, was ostracized for being a very good student; and her younger son Miles, now 21, for being gay.

Goodman credits Mainland Regional High School for promoting tolerance and said when her son came out and said he was gay, his friends – girls and boys – rallied around him and accepted who he was.

“Once Miles said he was gay and that he had the acceptance of his parents and of his friends, it gave the bullies nowhere to go,” Goodman said.

She added that parental acceptance of their children’s lifestyle has an enormous effect on their self confidence.

Goodman takes all these messages and tailors assemblies, seminars and professional development programs to fit the group she is working with. Her blend of jazz, pop, Latin and afro-beat rhythms tend to open the ears and minds of the audience she is trying to reach.

Whether it is “Stand up-Speak out” or “Live Out Loud,” or one of her other programs, Susan Goodman is pairing with school districts to start a conversation with students and help them take the wind out of the sails of the bullies and empower the bystanders.

Goodman said all of her assemblies programs comply with the New Jersey core curriculum standards.

To learn more about Goodman and her anti-bullying assemblies and programs and how to bring them to your group or school see [www.standup-speakout.com](http://www.standup-speakout.com) or call (609) 432-6346 or email [susan@standup-speakout.com](mailto:susan@standup-speakout.com)