

Dear PACER's Bullying Center,

My 11th birthday party meant a lot to me this year, because it gave me a chance to help kids my own age. Instead of a regular party, I had a ***Be a Friend, Bring a Friend, Make a Friend*** party! Everyone was invited because I know it makes me feel bad when people are left out. And to make it more fun, everyone who came was asked to bring a friend. I was hoping that by sharing our friends, we would have less chance of feeling alone and left out. It worked! We had over 100 kids come, my principal announced my party on the loud speaker at my middle school, my friends and I were written up in the newspaper, the TV station came and did a live news report on us, and we raised over \$1300.00 for PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center! I wasn't expecting to get so much attention, but it felt really great.

My mom always says that for every one mean person, there are ten more that are nice. She tells me to forget the bully and focus on helping my friends who are having a bad day instead. It works because the nicer I am to people, the nicer people are to me and the more friends I make. If someone is giving me a hard time, I always have another friend I can run to for help. So that was the theme of my party: **When we stand together, no one stands alone!**

During the party, no one thought about the bullies, they thought of everyone around them and having fun. The entire party was run by kids! We had a live band, ***Front Row***, made up of teenagers. There was a huge dance floor, foosball, air hockey, ping-pong, pool tables and crazy fun! My teenage brother and his friends made hotdogs for everyone. And instead of a cake, we served a mountain of brownies!

The party was thrown by kids to help us learn how to work together and have fun with one another. That was the point—well, that and to meet new people. I had a lot of kids there I'd never seen. My friend, Kelsey, surprised me and brought a friend named Estelle, who has special needs. Estelle went up on stage and asked the band to play "The Cup Song". Of course the singer of the band was happy to perform it for her. No one was laughing at Estelle or making fun of her when she got on stage and sang along. We had fun helping her and being nice to her. This was one of my favorite parts of the entire night because I realized how fun it is to be friends with people who are different.

At my birthday party we also played the Fun-Fact Game. Everyone had to write down on a piece of paper something embarrassing that happened to them. My mom picked them one at a time out of a bucket and read them out loud on stage. As a group we tried to guess who the fun fact was about. It was silly and we had a ton of funny stories. Everybody guessed mine. The embarrassing fact about me was that I threw a pencil at my teacher's forehead last year and didn't even get in trouble. My teacher was just surprised. My mom even told embarrassing things about herself, and so did the town police officer. This made people laugh at themselves

and feel better about all the times in school people laughed at us for doing something that was embarrassing. It helped me see that everyone makes mistakes and it's okay to laugh about it.

I saw a lot of people dancing and having fun. I'm glad my parents encouraged me to think bigger this year. They told me it would be more fun if I focused on everyone as opposed to just thinking about myself. At first I wasn't sure if I wanted to give up all of my gifts, but after the fun we had raising the money, I'm glad I did it!

Thank you PACERs for recognizing me and my friends. It was really sweet of you to donate the bookmarks too!

Sincerely,

Anistyn