It was just a few weeks back when a Michigan high school student made national headlines due to a vicious prank by some of her fellow students.

If you remember, she was picked by her classmates to be on her school's homecoming court. But her fellow classmates were just having a little fun with her.

A sad story that could have been much, much worse if not for the fact that adult members of her community rallied to her defense, and made her day on the homecoming court a testimony to what's really right with this country.

The young student, a long-time victim of bullying tactics throughout high school, was surrounded by the love, support and "dig in and do something" attitude that made this young woman's nightmare turn into a real Cinderella story.

It would be nice to report that all bullying incidents are so quickly defeated by the generosity of the victim's community. It would also be nice to report that all bullying incidents end up with such a wonderful outcome as this young woman's.

Sadly, that's often not the case. Bullied victims more often than not end up on the short end, suffering from such poor self-image of themselves that it has severe consequences far into their adult lives. Many don't survive the experience at all.

There have always been bullies. Whether we're talking about the schoolyard bully who intimidates his or her victim into surrendering lunch money, test scores, etc., or the adult who uses his or her position to force a "lesser" individual to do their bidding.

To be kind, bullies are often victims themselves, using their power over others to build up their own sagging self-esteem. But it's hardly an excuse. It's intimidation at its worse.

For some, bullying isn't really a big issue at all. They'll confirm that everyone has to deal with a bully at some point in their lives or another.

But it is a big deal and too many youngsters are suffering the consequences at a time in their lives when they most need support and encouragement.

Let's hope that we all take a lesson from the town of West Branch, and strongly confirm our conviction that bullying won't be tolerated, no matter what.

Kids have a god-given right to grow up strong, healthy and energized to take on the responsibilities of adulthood. We adults have a god-given responsibility to see that they do.

--Allyce Westphal