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SPORTS

# Burlington driver going full speed ahead with anti-bullying message

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Taylor Thring knew it could potentially backfire, but one of the key messages she emphasized in her anti-bullying video is: "Don't be a Bystander."

And after her experience of being bullied in high school, she couldn't be silent.

"It was hard to open up about it. It's still very raw. I overcame a lot of stuff and just got to the point where I had confidence in myself," she said. "I knew the people who bullied me would probably see it, but anything bad that could happen was outnumbered by the positive things that could happen."

Thring themed her video and anti-bullying campaign around her passion, auto racing. The 19-year-old spends her summers racing at Flamborough Speedway and titled her initiative Burn Out the Bullies.

She's been selling stickers, T-shirts and sweaters to raise money for ROCK (Reach Out Centre for Kids).

"I wanted to help out locally with kids living in the same town as I did getting the help that I did," Thring said. "I wanted to pay it forward."



Eric Uprichard photo

**Taylor Thring sports one a Burn Out the Bullies T-shirt. Thring has been selling shirts, sweaters and stickers to raise money for two organizations that work to combat bullying and lend support to kids who have been bullied.**

She is now expanding her fundraising to include Kids Help Phone to help kids across the country.

Thring said she was bullied after raising money and collecting food for a local food bank. Someone accused her online of stealing money and soon others were piling on through social media.

Thring said racing gave her a place to escape. A third-generation driver, she started racing go-karts when she was nine.

Though she's competing in a male-dominated sport, she said she's never encountered anything like attacks and insults that were being hurled at her online.

After releasing her video last month, many in the racing community reached out to her.

"So many people have said, 'I'm sorry I didn't help,' but they didn't know what was happening because I didn't talk about it," she said. "We do need to talk about it more. People are taking it a lot more seriously and we need more people to jump on board because it is a horrible, damaging issue."

Anti-Bullying Day, which originated in Canada in 2009 and will be recognized Feb. 22 this year, was endorsed by the United Nations in 2012 and is now recognized around the world.

Though it felt like the world was against her when she was being bullied, Thring said she now realizes the opposite was true.

"It's been amazing the amount of support I've been getting," she said. "I've got a lot of people in my corner to help me."

For more information on the Burn Out the Bully campaign, visit [www.facebook.com/ThringMotorSports](http://www.facebook.com/ThringMotorSports).



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