

CRIME: Attack on teen extreme example of modern-day bullying, expert says

Television major factor in violent behaviour

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

An expert on youth violence says the brutal attack on Jonathan Wamback was an extreme example of modern-day bullying and youth who know no limits. This was the ultimate bullying — a bunch of guys jumping on another guy without much sense of what they were doing," said Stu Auty, president of Canadian Safe School Network.

A former school administrator with the Peel Region school board, for three years Auty headed up the Vanier School for Young Offenders in Brampton. He is now considered an expert in the area of youth violence.

Auty was speaking at a violence prevention conference held by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Aurora Monday.

In the past, understanding youth violence was more straight-forward, said Auty, noting that now, boundaries once respected have been crossed in the pursuit of power.

The bully today has changed:

"The bully today has changed. This is a pretty wealthy area and you wouldn't think this would happen in your community," Auty said.

"A gang jumping all over one person is

the bully and, in this case, the bully is half a dozen people — the bully now is the group or the little guy with the weapon.

Auty, who had learned of the attack on Wamback prior to speaking to the group of police officers and SPCA workers, said the youths involved in the Newmarket boy's beating clearly had no sense at any time that they were crossing a line.

"The bully, in this case, had no boundaries, such as when you stop because you might kill the person. Attempted murder is not unusual today and it's not just here or in Toronto or Hamilton — it's all over the place," said Auty, who pointed to increasing prevalence of violence on television as a major factor in the way youth act out.

More responsibility needs to rest on the parents. Parents need to know who their kids' friends are and who they are hanging out with at night.

"If you've ever watched WWF wrestling it will be a revelation to you — you'll learn how to beat people up. You'll see a virtual replication of probably what happened to this kid — a bunch of goons jumping on a victim — but the wrestling is simulated."

Lack of guidance from parents has also contributed to the prevalence of youth violence, Auty said, adding that parents must play a greater role in teaching traditional

values to their children.

"More responsibility needs to rest on the parents. Parents need to know who their kids' friends are and who they are hanging out with at night. Why do kids go to gangs or belong to alternative groups? Because there is a sense of familial setting or group support network," he said.

Every child wants to be supported. Don't leave it up to the school system to be the parent.

"There is tremendous power in groups, it is exhilarating, euphoric and exciting and, when combined with drugs or booze, the mind blurs and they don't think of the impact of their behaviour."

Vital to the safety of a community is a child who has been provided guidelines and grows up to understand limits.

"Every child wants to be supported, listened to. Don't leave it up to the school system to be the parent."

Auty feels youth crime may start to level off after more than a decade of it increasing. However, he does not concede that the rate of violent crime by young people has declined.

"To those who say youth violence has flat-lined — if you really take a hard look at what's really gone down, it is soft crime like breaking and entering. But violence and use of weapons has increased."

Three teens remain in custody

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

Three teens charged with attempted murder in the beating of Jonathan Wamback remain in custody, while the 15-year-old Newmarket youth continues to struggle for survival in a Toronto hospital.

The three teens appeared briefly in Newmarket court last Thursday, and were scheduled to return Tuesday for a bail hearing. Each of the teens has secured his own lawyer and some family members were in court last week when the boys made their appearance.

Due to the severity of the charges they face and the fact they are 16 and 17 years old, the three will be tried as adults, unless their lawyers can convince a judge otherwise.

Wamback, 15, was in Ken Sturgeon Park in Newmarket's Stonehaven subdivision between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. June 29, when three youths confronted him near the public washrooms.

After a loud argument between the teens there was a fight and Wamback fled on foot, taking an indirect path toward his home. Wamback tried to hide from his assailants behind some bushes on a neighbour's lot.

The teens got into a grey Toyota Camry operated by a fourth youth and went looking for Wamback. They found him between two houses near the park area and severely beat him about his head.

Wamback was able to get home, where he collapsed into unconsciousness. He is now in the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

EXCLUSIVE

Families pray for each other's child at Sick Kids

FROM PAGE 1

a coma, but was taken off a respirator late last week.

"The doctors can't say what will happen, but they're happy he's off the respirator. It's too early to say other than it will be a very long recovery," said Wamback, adding while doctors say he may be hearing his parents' voices, he cannot respond.

Yesterday they told us they might be able to move him (to another unit) but he is not stabilized. He can't be moved until then," she said.

But on Friday, Wamback received a glimmer of encouragement from her son when she heard

him utter a slight moan.

"Today, I'm so happy because he moaned. A week ago, I was not sure he was going to survive," she said. "I thank God every second that my son was able to moan like he did."

A multi-disciplinary medical team, including specialists, nurses, respiratory and physio therapists, cares for Jonathan around the clock.

Wamback also credits York County Hospital for the care Jonathan received when he was first taken to the Newmarket hospital.

"I want to thank them for getting him here fast. They recognized there was a serious problem right away and got him here quickly."



JONATHAN WAMBACK
In coma since brutal beating

Jonathan is unable to see visitors right now, but Wamback said her son will need his friends in the days and weeks to come.

"I think Jonathan's friends would be upset to see him now, but his friends are wonderful boys — we know them all and I think in the future they will be part of the team to help him

recover, but he's just not ready yet."

And while they hold vigil at their son's bedside, the Wambacks ask that the community also think of Thornhill resident Brenden Todd, an 11-year-old boy recovering from a bone marrow transplant at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

I thank God every second that my son was able to moan like he did.

Last week, Todd was in critical condition and urgently needed blood platelets.

However, because of a summer

blood shortage across central Ontario, he was not getting the number of units he needed earlier this week to keep his condition from getting worse.

The families have been consoling each other at Sick Kids over the last two weeks.

"We support each other and there are lots of hugs and kisses and support," she said.

"But with the supply of blood dwindling, we really wish everyone would make a donation," she said, asking that people also consider financial donations to the hospital.

"We never thought we would ever need this hospital."

'Today, I'm so happy because he moaned. A week ago, I was not sure he was going to survive.'

WOODBINE CHRYSLER
GRAND CHEROKEE LTD.

429

WOODBINE
PLYMOUTH CHRYSLER

Woodbine Ave. Markham
at the intersection of Hwy 7

8290 WOODBINE AVE.