

Books Help Children Overcome Bullies, Fear

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Bullying and dealing with fear are common challenges for children, so five Tulane School of Social Work students joined forces for their final professional project before graduation to help area youth deal with those obstacles in a healthy manner.



Displaying their children's books, (from left) Martha Magnuson, Lindsey Baldwin, Lisa Mosca, Molly Bartlett and Allison Staiger make a presentation during the annual poster session at the Tulane School of Social Work. (Photo by Joseph Halm)

In the final project before their December 2009 graduation, Lindsey Baldwin, Molly Bartlett, Martha Magnuson, Lisa Mosca and Allison Staiger, created two children's books, *Sammy's Secret* and *The Bullydog*. Each book, complete with color illustrations, focuses on a traumatic issue children might face.

The Bullydog presents bullying from the point of view of both the victim and bully, while *Sammy's Secret* focuses on how to deal with fear. Both use bibliotherapy, a therapeutic tool in which books, stories and poetry are used as a means to gain insight and to help individuals deal with certain issues such as anger.

"We were able to teach our students that it is important to express their feelings in a

healthy manner instead of keeping it inside," Staiger says.

Designed for children ages 5â€”11, the books grew out of the students' experiences at their field placements, which were either with New Orleans Public Schools or with agencies such as Save the Children or Midtown Mental Health Clinic.

The group also created a facilitator's guide to encourage discussion. Student focus groups at Johnson Elementary School in New Orleans helped refine the books and provided a way to measure their effectiveness. All [social work](#) students must complete a professional project before they graduate.

"All of the focus group data showed that students felt better and were able to handle and process trauma in a healthier and more effective manner after reading and discussing the books," Barrett says.

The group, which is searching for funding to broaden the project, is presenting their work and research data during the Louisiana National Association of Social Workers annual conference this month.

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