Go out there and find that one child, that new kid, who just moved to town, standing over there by himself, be his friend, smile, be willing to help him out when he's pushed down, be willing to stand up for him. If we all do it together, we will change the world. It starts right here, right now.

-Kirk Smalley, Ty Smalley's father, at a Stand for the Silent rally

NURTURING SCHOOL CULTURE IN THE COMMUNITY

Each instance of bullying takes place within a larger social context comprised of the relationships between students, teachers, administrators, and staff of the school as well as the members of the community. The relationships among all of these people contribute to the culture of the school and researchers have found that the quality of a school's culture makes a tremendous difference in the degree of bullying that takes place there.
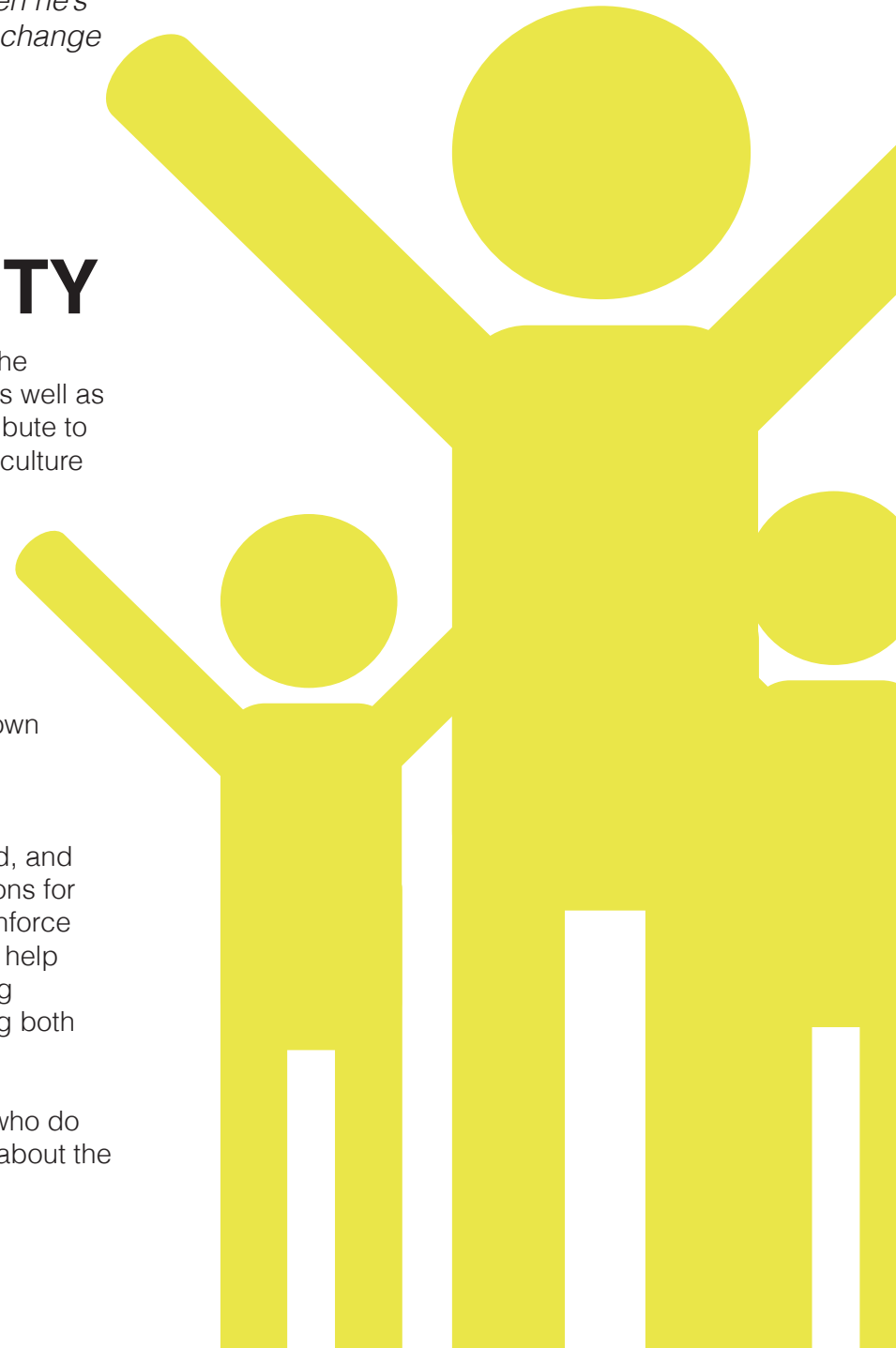
The complexity of the community and culture surrounding a school is illustrated in BULLY in the aftermath of Tyler Long's suicide in Murray County, Georgia. Five weeks after his death, Tyler's parents organized a town hall meeting to bring their community together to talk about bullying.

Twenty administrators from the Murray County school system were invited to the town meeting, but none attended. David Carroll, the local television news reporter who moderated the meeting, later wrote that if the school administrators had attended

"they would have heard students tearfully detailing being bullied, wrongly accused, and humiliated in open-stall bathrooms. They would have heard constructive suggestions for more, better trained resource officers. Ideas on student honor councils to better enforce and encourage good behavior. Plans to establish parent advocate groups to help families approach school officials on bullying issues. Goals of uniting churches and support groups to educate families on spotting both bullies and victims."

If such a forum on bullying were held in your community, who do you think would attend? What might the participants say about the culture of your school and community?

The BULLY Project

Sample Community Contract:

• Listen with respect. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.

• Make comments using "I" statements.

• If you do not feel safe making a comment or asking a question, write the thought down

• If someone offers an idea or question that helps your own learning, say "thank you."

• If someone says something that hurts or offends you, do not attack the person. Acknowledge that the comment—not the person—hurt your feeling and explain why.

• Put-downs are never okay.

• If you don't understand something, ask a question.

• Think with your head and your heart.

• Share talking time—provide room for others to speak.

• Do not interrupt others while they are speaking.

• Write down thoughts, in a journal or notebook, if you don't have time to say them during time together.