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2 Michigan Girl Scouts plan vigil, offer 'Phoebe's Pledge'

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Saddened by news of the suicide of a 15-year-old South Hadley High School student, two 12-year-old seventh-grade Girl Scouts in Michigan are taking a stand against bullying and have rallied their local community to join in their pledge.

As part of a comprehensive Girl Scout project, Alena Buczynski and Madeline Rayner have organized a vigil in Phoebe Prince's memory to be held tonight in the center of their home city, Marshall, Mich.

"When the girls read Phoebe's story, they were visibly shaken. There were tears in their eyes," said 36-year-old Beth Rayner, who is the troop leader of both teens, a seventh-grade teacher at the middle school and Madeline's mom.

In late March, when news spread nationwide of six South Hadley students being criminally charged for allegedly bullying their classmate, the two teens were moved into action and organized "Anti-Bullying Week" at their school. This past week, students at Marshall Middle School have participated in various activities designed to teach students to respect one another and to report bullying when it's witnessed.

But the two Girl Scouts wanted to extend their anti-bullying message outside their school as well and went before their city council to gain approval to hold tonight's vigil in Prince's memory. Community members will gather in the city's downtown beginning at 7:30 for an hourlong vigil that will recount Prince's story, followed by prayer, a poem, song and a speech from State Sen. Mike Nofs. Concluding the event, Buczynski and Rayner will lead the crowd in reciting "Phoebe's Pledge," which they wrote: "I pledge to not spread gossip in person or online, treat others with kindness and respect, take a stand for what is right, because bullying is wrong and hurts everybody."

"Bullying is everywhere, and (what happened in South Hadley) could happen here, too," said Beth Rayner. "I think that people everywhere are really starting to take this seriously."

By Friday, the two teens hope the other students in their school of about 760 will have signed their pledge.

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