

SPORTS

SENSEI JOHN P MIRRIONE DEVELOPS NATIONAL SCHOOL PROGRAM TO STOP BULLYING

By MIKE COHEN

John Mirrione is a master karate teacher, he performed as a break dancer at Harlem's Apollo theatre in the 80's and is a veteran having served in the Air Force. But when you ask Mirrione these days what he's most proud of, he speaks about his work helping kids who are bullied.

Mirrione heads one of the most influential anti-bullying campaigns in the country. He founded and directs the not-for-profit organization Harmony Power Foundation which is the charity arm of his well-known New City based

Karate School, Harmony by Karate.

"The mission of the charitable organization is to stand up to bullying and to stand for human equality," said Mirrione, 52. "Considering the world events, issues of bullying and racism are intertwined. When children bully they mostly attack human differences."

Harmony Power was officially formed in 2015, but it was years in the making that Mirrione had planned on making this his own personal mission. In 2010, Mirrione with his own money and with sponsorship by Harmony by Karate embarked on a 17 city tour includ-

ing stops in Chicago, New York City and Los Angeles where he imparted his message.

On the trip he shared with children at schools and YMCA's that he visited with tales of being bullied himself as a child and what he did to stand up to the people who wanted to destroy him. Most importantly, he stressed the importance of being self-empowered, believing in himself and knowing that anything is possible.

Since that trip, Harmony Power has become part of a New Jersey anti-bullying bill that was submitted by assemblywoman Shavonda E. Sumter. The goal of this bill is to recognize as many children as possible to promote harmony through art, music, dance, community service and other such avenues. Most recently 75 awards were given in Bayonne, NJ and 95 awards were given in Elizabeth, NJ. These acknowledgements were given in June as part of a Universal Harmony Day assembly.

"Kids need to believe, give of themselves and then they can achieve," said Mirrione. "This takes away the desire for them to hurt each

other."

Growing up in Brooklyn and Long Island, Mirrione learned firsthand just how painful bullying can be. Not only was he the victim of being picked on, but he saw how it negatively impacted the lives of other children. That is why the Universal Harmony Day assembly is so meaningful to him.

"It's a day when recognition is given to children to promote harmony in the world," said Mirrione. "When kids feel empowered, loved and listened to – great change can occur."

For more information on anti-bullying and the Harmony Power Foundation, please go to harmonypowernow.org or harmonybykarate.com. If you would like to speak to Sensei John P Mirrione you can contact him directly at 646-387-2073. #

In addition to being the Sports Editor of Education Update, Mike Cohen is the Founder/Director of Throwback Sports (a sports program for children of all abilities). He can be reached at throwbacksports@verizon.net