The energy was electrifying in the HHS auditorium last Thursday, Nov. 29 when Holyoke Elementary students pledged to “Take a Stand, Lend a Hand, Stop Bullying.”

The program not only educated students about bullying, but it also showcased and celebrated the bullying unit the kids have been working on the last couple months with elementary counselor Sharon Jones.

They have tackled many different bullying scenarios and now are confident they can be “upstanders” instead of bystanders.

First-graders Andrea Marquez, Caden Sporhase and Jessica Owens sign the banner, promising to take a stand against bullying.

—Enterprise photo

Students could barely contain their excitement when Jones introduced surprise guests from the Northeastern Junior College men's basketball team.

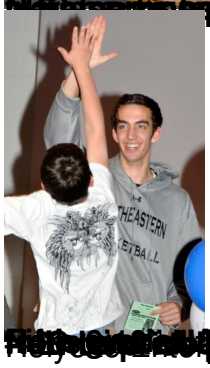
Head coach Eddie Trenkle and players Joe Dellenbach, Dre Clayton, Patryck Minter and Austin Gamblin showed their support of the "Take a Stand" program.

"It does happen ... every day," said Minter, explaining to the students how he was bullied as a child, even to the point of missing school because he didn't want to face the bullies. He was not always a 6'6" basketball player. "I know exactly where you're coming from."

The speakers reinforced how important it is to pay attention to how students are treating each other. At the beginning of every basketball season, the athletes are challenged to find ways to help at least three people on campus. Just simple acts of kindness make a huge difference to how the team is viewed by the other students and teachers.

"Each one of you has the power to change the world around you," said Gamblin. "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice."

Two students from each grade K-6 were lucky enough to win a ticket to an NJC basketball game, where they can see their new heroes in action.

Everyone was up on their feet as "Stand Up" by Sugarland and "Firework" by Katy Perry motivated students and teachers to take a stand against bullying.

Students rounded out the program by signing a banner to pledge their promise to "Take a Stand, Lend a Hand, Stop Bullying."