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AT&T, TYLER CLEMENTI FOUNDATION AND SIENA COLLEGE TEAM UP WITH NEW YORK SENATOR FUNKE, ASSEMBLYMEMBER BRONSON, ROCHESTER MAYOR WARREN TO HOST NEW CYBERBULLYING AMBASSADORS PROGRAM AT EAST HIGH SCHOOL

The AT&T and Siena Upstander Program is a peer-to-peer training program designed to help high school students combat cyberbullying

ROCHESTER, NY – March 9, 2018 - [AT&T](#), the Tyler Clementi Foundation and Siena College have teamed up with New York Senator Rich Funke, Assemblymember Harry Bronson, Rochester Mayor Lovely A. Warren and East High School on March 9, 2018 to host the AT&T and Siena Upstander Program, a new cyberbullying peer-to-peer prevention program utilizing trained Siena students to help educate students, teachers and school administrators on the growing cyberbullying epidemic and to provide workshops, tools and resources to combat it.

The AT&T and Siena Upstander Program grows out of the [Upstate Cyberbullying Census](#) survey conducted in late 2016 by the **Siena College Research Institute**, **AT&T** and the **Tyler Clementi Foundation** that measured the prevalence of cyberbullying among students, the awareness of this crisis among parents, and parents' understanding of their children's digital behaviors in New York. The staggering data from the study revealed one in four students in Upstate New York and more than 36% in the Rochester area have been a victim of cyberbullying, the highest percentage in Upstate New York. Those statistics, combined with feedback from schools requesting cyberbullying prevention programming, led AT&T, the Tyler Clementi Foundation and the Siena to collaborate on this public education campaign.

The objective of the program is to create an Upstander culture within East High School, and other schools where the program is presented. Upstander is a popular phrase used in the anti-bullying space, and also used by AT&T and the Tyler Clementi Foundation, which encourages students to not simply be a bystander when they witness cyberbullying but, rather, to speak up, notify an adult and/or interrupt the negative behavior. Students were asked to take the Upstander pledge and promote it throughout the community.

The innovative program pairs Siena College students who have been trained as cyberbullying ambassador facilitators with high school students for peer-to-peer conversations, role playing exercises and workshops. The program at East High School consisted of Siena students working with 25 selected student leaders for the first part of the school day in a workshop on how to be Upstander Ambassadors. At the end of the day, the Siena facilitators and the newly trained high school Upstander Ambassadors conducted a school-wide assembly program to share best practices, build awareness of the danger of cyberbullying and promote the Upstander behavior and culture.

"The impact of cyberbullying on our youth has become pervasive and alarming. We simply can't allow this crisis to destroy more lives and families," said **Marissa Shorenstein, president, AT&T-Northeast Region**. "In efforts to curb this negative behavior, AT&T has collaborated with leading organizations within the cyberbullying space to develop programs, including the AT&T and Siena Upstander Program, to give parents,

educators and students the tools to combat this epidemic and help facilitate a dialogue that will lead to positive change in our communities.”

The AT&T and Siena Upstander Program also features a [film produced by AT&T](#) incorporating award-winning short films made by high school students from across the country at AT&T’s Cyberbullying Film Invitational in 2016. The film is based on the students’ own unique and personal experiences with cyberbullying and its devastating aftermath. The program is being offered free to high schools across the state through supporting organizations.

“We are thrilled to work alongside AT&T and the Tyler Clementi Foundation to empower high school students to share their stories, connect with Siena students on a peer to peer level, and become leaders of the Upstander movement in their schools and communities,” said **Don Levy, director of the Siena College Research Institute**. “This program is at the heart of Siena’s mission as a Franciscan college and we are committed to assisting high school students, their parents, and schools to move from being victims and bystanders of cyberbullying to being Upstanders and ambassadors in combating this pervasive issue.”

“Electronic communication, regardless of the medium, is the quintessential way in which our youth communicate. That’s why it is vital that as a society we continue to talk about and responsibly educate adults and youth alike about the damage our words and actions can have on not just individuals, but entire families and communities,” said **Senator Funke**. “I applaud the students of Siena College, East High School and AT&T for engaging to create an environment that discourages cyberbullying.”

“We must do all we can to ensure that every child in New York State feels safe in and out of the classroom, and this program will help our students create an environment that is conducive to building self-esteem and learning successes,” **Assemblymember Bronson** said. “Under The AT&T and Siena Upstander Program’s peer-to-peer training program students will play an important role working with families, communities and law enforcement to prevent harassment, bullying and discrimination, and to support all student’s right to learn. I applaud the students, faculty and staff at East High for taking this important program and putting it to work for our community.”

“Every student has the right to learn in a safe space, whether in the classroom, in the lunch room, or online,” **Mayor Warren** said. “I am grateful for the efforts of AT&T and the Siena Upstander Program in protecting our youth from cyberbullying and contributing to a safe and productive learning environment.”

“We are honored to partner with AT&T, the Tyler Clementi Foundation, and the Siena College in the fight against cyberbullying in our schools and in our community,” said **Dr. Shaun Nelms, superintendent, East EPO**. “This cyberbullying prevention program will continue our work with students and staff at East in our quest to tackle bullying in all forms, including, but not limited to, online and digital forms of harassment and bullying. Together, we will take a stand against negative, detrimental online behavior and set a precedent for future generations in Rochester.”

Working with the Tyler Clementi Foundation and Common Sense Media, AT&T has made addressing the rise of cyberbullying a priority. In addition to the AT&T and Siena Upstander Ambassador program to help teens and parents more safely navigate a connected world, AT&T created [Digital You](#), a comprehensive public education resource offering tools, tips, apps, guidance and community education events for people of all ages and levels of online experience. It provides education about digital dilemmas and using the internet for a positive and safe outcome.

AT&T is also offering a groundbreaking AT&T-produced film, “There’s a Soul Behind That Screen,” and materials specifically designed for parents to recognize the warning signs and provide support for children who

have experienced cyberbullying. A parent guide to accompany the film, including tips to safeguard children against cyberbullying produced by Common Sense Media, can be found at soulbehindthatscreen.org.

AT&T is also empowering teens to rise above online negativity and abuse through its social-first campaign, [Later Haters](#). Influencers that teens love and trust will drive the movement on their social platforms – Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. AT&T hopes to encourage young people to use their mobile devices as a force for good.

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About Philanthropy & Social Innovation at AT&T

AT&T is committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its community initiatives, AT&T has a long history of investing in projects that create learning opportunities; promote academic and economic achievement; or address community needs. The company's signature philanthropic initiative, AT&T Aspire, drives innovation in education to promote student success in school and beyond. With a financial commitment of \$400 million since 2008, AT&T is leveraging technology, relationships and social innovation to help all students make their biggest dreams a reality.