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## Bullying at Concord High School

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CONCORD

### A spot for 'bad kids'

Suspects in tattoo case hang out there

By [Trent Spiner](#) / [Monitor staff](#)

May 23, 2010

On the short West Washington Street block where the police said a Concord High School freshman was bullied into getting a lewd tattoo on his buttocks, other students who took part said it takes "ink" and cigarettes to join their crew.

Their spot, nicknamed "Bell's Street" after a family who once lived there, is where the police said a 14-year-old student was targeted because he was intellectually challenged and wanted to fit in.

One man, Blake VanNest, 18, promised the freshman that others would stop bullying him once he got "Poop D--k" tattooed across his buttocks.

VanNest arranged to have another friend, Ryan Fisk, 19, bring a tattoo gun, which had been used without a license on other students in the group. Two brothers who live on the street let them into the basement through a nearby bulkhead door to use the home's electricity.

About noon on May 10, with others watching from metal folding chairs, VanNest and Fisk threatened the victim into kneeling against a weight bench, taking turns etching dark ink into his skin, the police said.

While VanNest and Fisk are jailed on \$35,000 bail, their friends, some of whom have also been charged in connection with the incident, returned late last week to their spot on West Washington Street. Moments after the final bell rang at Concord High, they gathered to smoke cigarettes and laugh about pictures of their friends in the newspaper.

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"It's a place to go after school for the 'bad kids,' " said 18-year-old senior Sam Kidder, making quotation signs with his fingers. "It's been this kind of sacred spot for all of us to go to."

Kidder has his own tattoo from Fisk, a slightly blotchy green logo of a band he likes from Manchester on his left arm.

Neighbors complain of fights, loud music, littering and aggressive teenagers who refuse to move out of the way for oncoming traffic. Some feel uncomfortable about giving their names or calling the police, for fear of being targeted themselves. The police said officers who patrol the area keep a special eye on West Washington Street, but it's one of many areas of focus.

## White supremacists?

In a series of interviews with the Monitor, friends and parents said VanNest and Fisk had been friends for a number of years. Their shared interests include tattoos, fishing and the outdoors.

Both Fisk and VanNest have swastikas on their chests, according to the police and their friends.

Fisk's is jagged and over his heart. Two days after having it done, he regretted the decision, his public defender said last week. Fisk tried to remove it using sandpaper and burning it with cigarettes, Kidder said.

VanNest also has tattoos of a swastika and Confederate flag, some of which Fisk designed, according to the police.

At a court hearing, both of their mothers said those tattoos came as a surprise.

"I'm more outraged about the swastikas than anything," Patti VanNest said last week.

She said her son was in the automotive program at the high school, ready to graduate within weeks.

"I know the allegations - as horrible as they are - I just can't believe them," she said in an interview.

In asking a judge for high cash bail, prosecutors said those tattoos tied VanNest and Fisk to the white supremacist movement. City prosecutor Scott Murray said they committed hate crimes.

But their friends deny those claims, instead saying the tattoos were meant as jokes.

Fisk, a former Concord High student, is a tattoo enthusiast who talked about becoming a professional artist, according to Travis Degreenia, 18, who was on West Washington Street after school Friday. ([next page >>](#))

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### A spot for 'bad kids' - page 2

Suspects in tattoo case hang out there

When Fisk did a job on someone's skin, he took it seriously, said Zach Hebert, 15, who went on to buy the gun allegedly used in the May 10 assault for \$30. Fisk ordered new, sealed needles online and made sure to sterilize tattoo sites, including using gloves, Hebert said.

After buying the gun, Hebert tried to tattoo "Loyalty" onto his leg but was stopped by his mother after completing only the first two letters, according to the mother.

At the time of the incident, both Fisk and VanNest were out on bail. About a week before the bullying began, the Hopkinton police were called to a Hatfield Road home where a pickup truck was driving in circles on the front lawn, police records show.

VanNest and Fisk, both intoxicated, were shouting at residents inside just before 11 p.m. on March 22, Hopkinton police Chief Stephen Pecora said. Fisk, the driver and a former Hopkinton resident, was arrested for having a blood alcohol level about 50 percent over the state limit, records show.

Both were also charged with misdemeanor prowling and possession of alcohol charges. They were arraigned in Concord District Court on May 4 with orders to not break any state or federal laws. Within a day or two of that hearing, the bullying began, according to the Concord police.

The police don't believe the two incidents are related.

"That whole crew, they like to live life to the fullest," said Logan Thayer, 18.

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## West Washington Street

Mel Mattice of Holt Street said he counts the days until high school classes are over, when he said people stop congregating on West Washington Street.

The issue has been going on for years, he said. While there are different faces, the smell of cigarettes and marijuana is the same; the music is just as loud; and the rudeness has not subsided.

Last year, when he was standing on the front porch testing out a new camera, a teenager walked over from across the street to confront Mattice.

"They sit here all the time during the day," he said. "Why they're not in school, I don't know."

Mattice, who spends a time outdoors planting flowers along the street, said he sees the largest groups of students before and after school and during lunch.

"They're trashing the place, and their language is not good," he said.

He was careful to add that most are good kids.

Another neighbor, who asked not to be named, said she saw a fight within the last month.

"They were full-out going at it," she said. "But how do I know they weren't wrestling?"

Deputy Chief John Duval said officers regularly patrol the area, but it's one spot in a long list of areas where the police focus.

"Let's just say, it's an attractive nuisance for kids to hang out," he said. "We've had complaints of smoking cigarettes, littering, blocking the roadway and some allegations of drug use. The beat officer who is working that shift will try to drive by and move kids along."

Students at "Bell's Street" last week, said they have made an effort to pick up trash and not leave cigarette filters behind.

"Even if they close down this street, there's going to be another place," Degreenia said. "No matter what high school you go to, there's always a place for people to go to smoke butts and hang out."

Kidder said it's not all bad - they help each other learn new skateboarding tricks.

"It's a meeting place where you go to figure out what you're going to do with the rest of your day," Kidder said, with a pack of cigarettes rolled into his sleeve. ([next page >>](#))

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Suspects in tattoo case hang out there

*(Trent Spiner can be reached at 369-3306 or [tspinner@cmonitor.com](mailto:tspinner@cmonitor.com).)*

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will face expulsion from the school district, Principal Gene Connolly said. The students have already been handed 10-day suspensions for their roles in the May 10 incident, which the police have labeled a hate crime against an intellectually challenged 14-year-old student....  5

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### You gotta be kidding me...

By [The Professor](#) - 05/24/2010 - 10:05 pm

I'll admit that when I was a teenager, we had a hangout for partying too. The difference is that we always sought out secluded places, away from people and the law. The brashness of these kids is shocking - smoking cigarettes, fighting, getting high right out in the open. They are basically holding this neighborhood hostage (if you don't think so then why are people afraid to be identified?). I think what is even more shocking is that this band of punks seem to be calling the shots - sorry hopeforpeace but you have to call a pig a pig. Am I to understand that the police force in our capital city can't deter a group of teenagers from openly breaking a menagerie of laws? How about a few arrests folks? Usually when a police officer asks you to leave and you come back the next day, breaking the same laws; citations and bracelets come out. Bust any kid under the age of 18 who is smoking, or out of school during school hours (it is a law to be in school everyday). Search sketchy individuals for drugs, weapons, etc. Better yet, bring a drug dog to sniff the cars and 18+ kids (I think it is illegal to search an underage hoodlum). Throw in a few tasers for good measure, and the situation will most likely be resolved. The fact is that these little turds are not living life to the fullest - they are starting down the wrong path early. They need to be taught some respect and consideration for the laws of society. If we accept this behavior, then the hate crimes and drunken terrorism that the 2 morons sitting in prison just committed is on all of our hands.



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### Obvious...

By [hrd2hndlecla3](#) - 05/24/2010 - 8:17 am

in this case that the parents of these so called "bad kids" are not doing their job. Why are the parents allowing these kids to hang out all day on a street corner???? Dont they have chores and responsibilities at home? The Police should not have to take care of these kids. THAT IS THE PARENTS JOB!



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### Living life to the fullest?

By [Tippytoo](#) - 05/23/2010 - 3:24 pm

How about living life selfishly? These kids don't have any respect for themselves and other's property. Go to the park and play some baseball or street hockey. Go volunteer somewhere, just do something positive for yourself and others. I don't think hanging around on street corners smoking with your friends will really add any positive, productive influence on your future.



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### The loitering needs to stop.....

By [tercor](#) - 05/23/2010 - 11:46 am

Just a bunch of useless lowlife punks who need a wakeup call. It's about time the losers found out that they don't make the rules, but they ARE GOING to follow them!!!! If it takes the police 50 trips by a day to move them along, well then that's what should happen. They aren't the bosses and it's about time they figured it out.



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### Built a Dunkin Donuts there.

By [Damkeeper](#) - 05/23/2010 - 1:10 pm

Then you'll see lots of police in the neighborhood at all times.



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### I don't have an opinion on

By [Hopeforpeace](#) - 05/23/2010 - 11:02 am

I don't have an opinion on the events that took place on this street as I am trying not to make judgments based on what the media reports. But I am not in any way defending the situation.

As a resident of Holt St. with W. Washington on the backside of our home, I would like to say that having a disabled child myself the situation is unsettling at times with the congregation of kids hanging outside during the day. Mostly because of the offensive language we sometimes hear (Very typical of most teenagers right?). There is smoking, which is really up to the authorities to handle as it's their job. The kids have never bothered us, nor have they EVER said anything derogatory to my child with clearly obvious disabilities.

When I come home, they always move out the road and apologize for being in the road. I don't feel they are "bad" kids. Maybe just need a place to hang out. I do feel that some kids have gone through their own problems in their lives, which may warrant some kind of intervention for their own future/s. I have spoken with a few kids objectively from the high school that are aware of the situation on the street and the situation what happened May 10th, they do feel the story has been convoluted and inflated by media reports.

Although the kids on the street may seem like rough kids or as people have said "scum", I don't feel that anybody should make judgments on anybody if they don't know them, or their lives.

Just as speculating on what this child/victim's condition is makes people just as judgmental to the so-call "bad" kids. Judging is judging. Special needs kids have privacy rights!! Special need encompasses a lot of needs, some of which unfortunately a lot of times go unnoticed or are hidden by a child out of sheer embarrassment. Yes, and maybe because of the fear of being picked on. School supports MUST be in place, along with possible psycho-therapy.

I wish people would focus on their own families at this time and stop judging the neighborhood. How would you feel having your home judged by others because of something that happened that was out of your control?

Bad things happen everywhere, it's just when it's made into a public disgrace via media, and it becomes stereotyped as "bad". Let the authorities do their jobs, get the facts all together, make appropriate and pro-active decisions, and you parents go on with your own good parenting skills!!! Like I said, I don't have a personal opinion as to the events that took place May 10th. I have an opinion on the article about the street and the families in the neighborhood's well-being. I think we would all appreciate some kindness. Thank you.

PEACE.



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The young man labeled as the instigator in a bullying crime that rocked Concord High School last spring pleaded guilty to three misdemeanors... 2

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