

Congressman Hastings honored the courage and strength of Michael Brewer by giving the following speech on November 17, 2009.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor 15-year-old Michael Brewer of Deerfield Beach, Florida, whose courage and strength defy the atrocious attack he has endured. Michael sustained burns to over 65 percent of his body after a group of schoolmates set him on fire in an act of cruel revenge. On October 12, 2009, neighborhood bullies Matthew Bent, 15; brothers Denver and Jeremy Jarvis, 15 and 13 respectively; Steven Shelton, 15; and Jesus Mendez, 15; surrounded Michael in the parking lot of Limetree Village Apartments, poured rubbing alcohol on him, and set him on fire with a lighter. Led by Bent, the bullies sought him out and terrorized him for not paying back \$40 borrowed to buy a video game. Michael had called the police the night before the encounter when Bent attempted to steal a \$500 custom bike from Michael's father at their home.

I am truly shocked and outraged by this heinous crime. Michael still remains in critical condition at the University of Miami-Jackson Memorial Hospital Burn Center and will have to endure a long and painful recovery process. A 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Deerfield Beach Middle School, he has since received hundreds of cards and letters of support from fellow classmates and well-wishers from around the world. My thoughts and prayers go out to Michael, his family, and friends during this most difficult time. It is heartening to hear that Michael's first surgery went well and that his doctors are cautiously optimistic about his recovery.

In addition, I want to commend the South Florida community for coming together to raise money in order to help the Brewer family pay for Michael's medical expenses. During these difficult economic times, these Floridians have shown their true colors by extending a helping hand to a neighbor in need. In particular, I would like to recognize Neighbors 4 Neighbors for raising more than \$10,000 for Michael, and Broward Sheriff's detective Joe Kessler for his leadership and community activism.

Madam Speaker, we must stop the dangerous values of bullying and violence from being perpetuated in our schools and communities. Young people like Michael deserve a safe educational environment in which they can reach their full potential and become respectful, contributing members of our society.

- [ARCHIVED HEROES](#)

**Michael Brewer**

Monday, 16 November 2009 19:00

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