Are you ready to speak up against bullying?

By Frazier Moore | Associated Press

Cartoon Network is challenging the public to clear its throat and tell the world "I speak up" in a chorus of 1 million videos. Participants are invited to declare those three words into their mobile devices and share their videos at www.StopBullyingSpeakUp.com, as well as to their own social media platforms using the hashtag ISpeakUp.

The drive is kicking off Cartoon Network's annual Stop Bullying: Speak Up campaign, which will culminate during its Speak Up Week, Sept. 29 through Oct. 3 — which in turn paves the way for National Bullying Prevention Month in October.

The goal, as Cartoon Network puts it: To collect 1 million user-generated videos that unite the voices of kids, parents, educators, celebrities and government officials, each committing to speak up when someone gets bullied.

Selected videos from participants will become part of campaign spots appearing on Cartoon Network, its digital platforms and Boomerang through October, the network said in making its announcement Thursday. It also will air public-service announcements with anti-bullying themes, and each day an onscreen "I Speak Up" tally will update how many participants have officially gone on record with videos and posts. (The website includes directions for sharing an "I Speak Up" video.)

Joining in the outreach are partner organizations including Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 4-H Clubs, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Federation of Teachers and the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention.

"We think it will be incredibly empowering for kids to know that a million people out there are speaking up for them," says Alice Cahn, Cartoon Network vice president of social responsibility.

While the video campaign is new this year, the network's anti-bullying initiative began in 2010. According to Cahn, it arose from research by the network in which
kids said, among all the things that bothered them, that bullying could be most easily addressed — if they only had others' support.

Among the kids' messages, according to Cahn: "It's not so much that I'm getting picked on, but I feel so terrible when my friends are picked on and I don't know what to do."

Cartoon Network's year-round "I Speak Out" website provides information resources for kids, parents and educators, all of whom may be primed to intervene when a bully strikes, but may not always know the best way to take action. (Turns out, even if direct confrontation isn't realistic for a kid, a gesture after the fact can be powerful: When the bullying is over, say something nice to the kid who was bullied.)

The campaign targets youngsters of elementary grades through early middle school, Cahn says, when getting bully-savvy can serve them well into high school and beyond.

"When we give them the right social and emotional grounding, it stays with them," she says. "We want to give kids confidence and competence when bullying happens, and to let them know they're not the only one."

**Critical thinking challenge:** Why is it more effective to unite the voices of kids, parents, educators, celebrities and government officials – if it's only kids that are victims? How does bullying affect people other than kids?