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Youths learn leadership skills
Youths advised on leadership skills, sound decision making

By LOHR McKINSTRY, Staff Writer

TICONDEROGA -- Motivational speaker David Major jumped up and down on a \$20 bill and at one point tore off his shirt to make a point.

The Toronto-based 24-year-old was one of several presenters at Youth Leadership 2006, held Tuesday at North Country Community College's Ticonderoga campus.

At the event's premiere, 65 high-school students from seven Essex County schools listened to people who told them everything from how to make an intelligent decision to how to prepare for a job interview.

Students from Lake Placid, Willsboro, Elizabethtown-Lewis, Moriah, Crown Point, Keene and Ticonderoga spent the day learning how to be leaders of the future.

Which is just what many of them will be, said Willsboro Central School teacher Keith Stone.

"This is a really great program, especially the section on portfolios. They learned how to create portfolios they can take to a college or job interview."

DEVELOPING BRAIN

Susan Allot, a nurse with the Essex County Public Health Department, even brought with her a model of a teenager's brain.

"There is nothing wrong with the teenage brain," Allot said. "It is just developing."

The part of the brain called the amygdala is overactive in youths, she said.

"It specializes in gut reactions and intense feelings."

It isn't until the early 20s that people have complete emotional judgment skills and impulse controls.

So that means "hard-wiring" the brain now for a successful future, Allot told them.

"Are you going to be one to shoot hoops or shoot heroin? Those are things that we train our brain for at this point in time."

JOB INTERVIEWS

How to overcome job-interview jitters is what Gene Vetter of International Paper's Human Resources Department taught students.

"What you say at an interview is not nearly as important as how you say it. Use limited gestures. You have to present yourself in a nice, controlled manner."

Good manners are important at an interview, he said, noting that former Ticonderoga Mill Manager Calvin Staudt wouldn't hire anyone who wore a hat in the building.

"You need to be comfortable," Vetter said. "You need to be pleasant, open and warm. Show some confidence."

It's also important to be honest in an interview, he said.

"We ask have you ever taken on a leadership role? If you say yes, we ask for examples. Sometimes people can't think of any."

People should also decide during a job interview if that's where they want to work, Vetter said.

"I always ask people if they have everything they need to know about the job."

LIKELY TO RETURN

The Essex County Youth Bureau was one of the sponsors of the event, and Assistant Director Scot Hurlburt said it was so successful they will probably do it again next year.

"It was open to every school that wanted to attend, and it's been a pretty interesting day. A lot of people have worked on this."

Other sponsors were Reconnecting Youth, OneWorkSource, Adirondack Community Action Program, United Way, Essex County Industrial Development Agency, North Country Community College, Eastern Adirondack Healthcare Network, Essex County Stop-DWI and NYCO Minerals.

THE RIGHT DECISIONS

Keene Central School student Logan Quinn said he benefited from the conference.

"We talked about how you make decisions. If you start smoking, how much do you smoke? Where do you get the money? Do you let yourself get addicted?"

"Those are all decisions you have to make at our age."

The day wrapped up with Major telling students they have to motivate themselves.

"Who wants a \$20 bill?" he yelled, before throwing it down and stomping on it.

He then asked if anyone still wanted it, and many said they did.

"You all still want it. Why? It's still worth \$20. As you go through life, people are going to crumple you up and step on you. So you have to be self-motivated."

He compared high-school life to the reality-television program "Survivor."

"You have to be able to outwait and outlast and outthink everyone else."

E-mail Lohr McKinstry at: lmckinstry@pressrepublican.com