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Bethany gives some guy-talk chances

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MOLINE -- Girls have heard plenty of teen pregnancy-prevention information from Bethany for Children and Families, but administrators decided it was time for some "guy talk."

The agency hosted a "What About the Boys" conference on April 11 for male students from 11 area high schools. The conference at Western Illinois University Quad Cities Riverfront Campus was "designed to help young men make good decisions as they grow into adults," a news release said.

"It's only appropriate that we do a conference like this, because we do many things for the girls but never talk to the guys," Bethany community services division coordinator Mary Ann McLeod told attendees. "This is the first of what we hope will be many such conferences."

Topics covered during the conference included:

- "What it means to be a man"
- "Achieving real success"
- "Passion preparation and purpose."
- "Get rich giving"
- "Invincibility and the criminal justice system"
- "Sex: What is it?"

United Township High School graduates and noted athletes Demetrius and Demetriyone Singleton, creators of a nonprofit Quad Cities Blue Raiders basketball team for boys 14-under, 15-under and 16-under, opened the conference by sharing their story about how Bethany services helped shape their lives and turned them into better people.

The Singeltons used their first and last initials to develop a motto that reads: "Dream+Dedication=Success."

They had attendees stand and repeat "I am here to learn. I am here to experience. I'm here to dream. And I want to be dedicated to my dream because I want to succeed."

The twins took turns sharing stories of how they were born in Champaign, raised largely by their



Photo: Submitted

Demetriyone and Demetrius Singleton took turns delivering a keynote address Friday, April 11, at the "What About Boys" conference planned by a teen pregnancy prevention advisory committee of Bethany for Children and Families. Male students from 11 area high schools attended the conference.

grandmother, moved to East Moline when they were about 7 or 8, their struggles, and later athletic and academic success.

"We were rebellious because we were trying to move back to Champaign and to our grandmother," Demetrius said. "And we picked up some bad habits."

Demetriyone said that once they got to Glenview Middle School, "we hit a wall once girls got involved. We had it all figured out that if we could just get C's and be in athletics, we could still get the girls."

Demetrius' gir friend got pregnant in his senior year at United Township, Demetriyone said.

"She made me grow to be a man earlier than I expected," Demetrius said.

"By the end of our high school years, we started figuring everything out," Demetriyone said. "We started looking closely at 1, Where can sports take us? 2, Where can education take us? And 3, What is my brother going to do? He's got a baby."

Their mom stopped playing sports when she was 16 and "had us," he said. "She was always at any of our events, though, and her motto was 'If you can't do your best, sit down.'"

The Singletons said they were three-sport athletes at UT.

Demetriyone went on to enroll at Ashford University in Clinton, where he became the college's first All-American in track. He later transferred to Clark College in Dubuque, where he became the university's first male to qualify for nationals, he said.

Demetrius attended the University of Dubuque.

"When I arrived, I sat there and stared at the wall for two hours and decided I wanted to go home," he said, adding that he also thought about joining his brother at Clark College. However, his mother and brother told them he should stay where he was.

"I eventually gave up basketball, hit the books hard and graduated in 3 1/2 years," he said.

Demetriyone's last piece of advice to conference-goers was to "find a dream, be dedicated to that dream and you can be successful."

The conference was co-sponsored by Bethany, WIU, Deere and Co., Eyes Open Iowa and the Iowa Department of Public Health Personal Responsibility Education Program.

A teen pregnancy prevention advisory committee of Bethany staff members and community stakeholders planned the conference.