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‘Don’t give up’

Loyal speaker spreads message of hope

By Cheyenne Thomas

If there was one thing Terrence Talley wanted students from Loyal and Greenwood to get out of his presentation, it was: “Don’t give up.”

In a time when students and teachers have been struggling with adversity of all types, Talley had come to Loyal to inspire hope and strength to those who were struggling. While simple, his message to them of “Don’t give up,” was about letting the audience know that they were not alone, that there were people who cared for them, and to take care of each other in the face of difficulties.

The Milwaukee native was at the Loyal School District on March 6, giving separate presentations to the Loyal elementary, middle school, and Loyal and Greenwood high school students during school hours that day. He also spoke later that night in a presentation to the Loyal community.

Each time he spoke, the message had a powerful impact. The conclusion of his speech to the high school students left many in tears as they hugged their teachers at the program’s end. Talley said life has been difficult for both students and teachers alike in the past few years, and everyone needs to know they have friends and support.

“I want you all to come down and give each other a hug,” he said. “Make sure you know that there is someone who cares about you. That you matter. You are doing a good job. They may not say it or show it, but you are making a difference.”

Talley spent an hour talking to the high school students of Loyal and Greenwood, first loosening up the crowd of

students with an impromptu dance performance by volunteering teachers. After that, his lesson began.

“I want to talk to you about one thing,” he said. “If there is one thing that I want you to leave here today with is that you don’t give up.”

In the next 45 minutes, Talley shared his experiences with numerous teenagers across the country. As he has traveled the U.S. for the past 12 years to deliver his message, he said it is not difficult for him to find someone who has been hit hard by life. Taking the time to reach out to them, he said, can make all the difference.

“Some of you in this room are on the verge. As you walked in here today, some of you totally shut down,” he said. “But I am doing this, the reason we’re here right now is because there is someone who cares about you... There was a boy earlier today from the junior high presentation who walked up to me and goes, ‘I hope my sister hears this today.’ I don’t know who that sister was, but I want her to know that there are people who care about her. I’m not here for everyone, but I am here for someone in this room. One thing you have to know is don’t give up.”

For many kids, Talley said it can be very easy to feel alone and that society is letting them fall through the cracks. Talley has met many kids who had such struggles over the years. A girl who always smiled, despite cutting herself; a boy who was on the verge of committing suicide; another boy who had to work every day after school, despite his young age, to feed his hungry family;

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CHEYENNE THOMAS/STAFF PHOTO

Everybody could use a hug

A high school student who had attended a presentation by speaker Terrence Talley on March 6 gives her teacher a hug at the conclusion of the program. Talley was in Loyal on Monday speaking to Loyal and Greenwood students about staying strong and not giving up in spite of adversity.

Hoes, SKG honored by Spencer Chamber

By Cheyenne Thomas

It’s not often that there’s a special connection between the honored citizen and business of the year in the same year, but this year’s recipients of these awards from the Spencer Chamber of Commerce have a very intertwined history. Bill Hoes and the Spencer Kids Group (SKG) were honored by the chamber for their work in making the community of Spencer a better place.

Awards for the Citizen and Business of the Year had been given to Hoes and the SKG during the Spencer Chamber of Commerce Concert in the Park held last summer on Aug. 3, but the Chamber further recognized the Citizen and Business of the Year at its annual banquet held on March 5 in the SKG building at 117 E. Clark St.

In receiving the honor of Citizen of the Year, Hoes said it was a blessing to have been able to work in the community of Spencer for so many years as its police chief.

“Thank you to everyone, I have been blessed,” he said. “I appreciate everyone

that is in this community and I have been blessed to have so many good acquaintances and friends; from the kids here in Spencer on up.”

Born in Green Bay and graduating from Winneconne High School, Hoes came to Spencer in the spring of 1977 and was hired on as the police chief to replace Jim Mondloch, who had resigned the previous fall. It was a position Hoes would hold for the next 30 years, retiring in 2008. After his retirement, Hoes has continued to serve the Spencer community as a member of the village board and as a supporter of the SKG and Chamber.

“I had filled out an application for the position back in ‘76 and sent it in,” said Hoes on his arrival in Spencer. “The board at that time came in, interviewed me and I got the job that I had for 32 years.”

While he went about his job, Hoes said it was very important for him to take the time to speak to the children of the community. Whether it was through the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program he helped run for 19 years or just stopping by the classrooms for a chat, he

said the lessons learned by the students at school never just stayed there. Instead, the children brought those lessons home with them, talked to their parents about them; and as a result, Hoes was able to reach far more people in a positive way than he ever could have by himself.

“When I first came to Spencer, the first place I went to was the school,” he said. “I met with the kids first. The kids would then go home and talk to their mom and dad and tell them about what I had told them. If you took care of the kids, it would spread back to the folks at home. It worked really well. You took care of your people, that was your job and that was how I policed.”

Over the years of his service, Hoes said he found something special in the community. He saw it in the kids when he would come by the school to teach and interact with them, and he saw it in the adults as they would go about their business in the village.

“The quality of the people is number one,” he said. “They are good, quality people. Strong families, raising good kids

and getting them well educated. I have seen so many kids come through the system and saw how successful they can be from Spencer.”

It was during his tenure as police chief that the SKG was first formed. Hoes had a hand in that creation, as he, along with several community members, saw a need for a safe place for children in the village to gather after school.

“Between me and Pauline (Frome) that is where the idea (of the SKG) came from,” said Hoes. “I had gotten a phone call from her and she said that we had to do something for the kids in the community.”

That phone call quickly brought about a movement in the village that would soon be known as the Spencer Kids Group. For a short time, the SKG operated with no permanent residence, but a planned move by the village board to build a new village hall changed all that.

“It’s kind of ironic,” said Hoes. “We’re being honored in a building that not just me, but many people, helped save. Back

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and another girl who was denied affection from her mother because she was "too old to be a baby." All those kids were hurting in different ways, but because someone reached out and let them know they weren't alone, they were able to find a way to get through their darkest times.

"You can help someone else have hope," he said. "These kind of things happen to all of us... they may not listen to me, but they will listen to you. Make sure they know you care and that they can do this."

Sometimes, Talley said, it can be difficult to tell if a person is having a hard time. Masks that people create for themselves can hide their struggles very well. In the cases of some of those other kids he has met, Talley said others thought the kid was just acting weird, or were scary and unapproachable, or they didn't even notice the child's pain. But the pain is still there, and those who are struggling should not be afraid to remove their mask and let someone in.

"Some of you are very good at giving big smiles, but you're hiding a lot. You can find yourself keeping up this facade, but you don't have to keep up this facade for someone to like you," he said. "The older you get, the more you wear a mask, the more you feel you have to keep that mask on. I would hate for you to feel like you have to do that for the rest of your life."

Looking out over the crowd of students

and teachers, Talley said it would be impossible for him to know each and every struggle that a person is going through. But he knows that life has been hard for so many in different ways. They need to stay strong and refuse to give up.

"I'm sorry for the person in here right now that feels they don't have a future," he said. "But don't give up. That feeling you have when you feel like you're drowning? You're not drowning, you're fighting."



Terrence Talley (left) dances alongside some teachers at the start of his March 6 presentation.



Terrence Talley (right) directs a portion of his speech to the teachers from the Loyal and Greenwood School Districts during his high school presentation March 6. He thanked the teachers for the work they have put in to teach their students and encouraged them to keep making a difference in their student's lives.



CHEYENNE THOMAS/STAFF PHOTOS

Students from the Loyal and Greenwood High Schools exchange hugs with their teachers at the end of Terrence Talley's presentation. The two groups not only gave each other hugs, but also handshakes, fist bumps and other gestures of support and thanks.

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then, they (the village board) had wanted to build a new hall and the old village hall (where the SKG now resides) would just go away. But we said, 'No, let's save it and use it for our youth. Make it a place for kids. A safe place for them to go.'

Looking around at the building now, Hoes said, so much has changed. Numerous handprints mark the walls, revealing just how many kids have passed through the SKG doors. Hoes remembers them all, and recalls the memories of seeing each child grow up rather fondly.

"There are handprints on the walls here of kids that I saw and dealt with at the school," he said. "I know every one of them. This place (the SKG) has done very well with the kids. I'm glad we still have it."

The Spencer Kids Group has continued over its 25 years of existence to serve and educate the children in the Spencer area. During the banquet, SKG director Erica Schober was also honored by the Spencer Chamber for her work over the past several years in her position as director.




CHEYENNE THOMAS/STAFF PHOTO

The Spencer Chamber of Commerce had selected the Spencer Kids Group (SKG) as the Business of the Year and Bill Hoes as its Citizen of the Year, honoring both at its annual banquet held March 5. Members of the SKG Board being honored at the banquet were (from left) Linda Hinrichsen, treasurer; Erica Schober, agency director; Lindsey Hinrichsen, vice president; Dan Hill, member and Bill Hoes, member.

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