

Harlem Ambassadors visit middle school

WORTHINGTON — Believe in yourself, stay positive, work hard, love who you are and never give up. These were the principle messages delivered to students at the Worthington Middle School Wednesday morning by a team of Harlem Ambassadors (HA). By: [Justine Wettschreck](#), Worthington Daily Globe



WORTHINGTON — Believe in yourself, stay positive, work hard, love who you are and never give up. These were the principle messages delivered to students at the Worthington Middle School Wednesday morning by a team of Harlem Ambassadors (HA).

“I will try hard to work hard!” the middle-schoolers chanted along with HA LaMarvon Jackson, who had just told the students his story.

The Harlem Ambassadors are not affiliated with any other Harlem basketball teams, but are a group of young men and women who have attended college, played college basketball and are drug-free.

The team is composed of two touring units, each of which tours nationally and internationally to perform fundraising events for non-profit groups and entertainment events for the military.

“To be part of our group, you must have a college degree and you must be drug-free,” HA Julia Hargrove told the students. “It is not always easy being among peers and making the right choices.”

The program, called “Stay in School, Stay off Drugs,” was sponsored by the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce Sports and Recreation Committee and the Worthington Optimist Club.

If the reaction from students was any indication, the performance was a hit. They enthusiastically shouted out answers, clapped along with music and applauded the basketball performance, even when HA Corey Thompson missed a slam dunk.

“You know what happens when you mess up?” Hargrove asked. “You try again!”

For a second time, the group circled around, tossing a red, white and blue basketball back and forth. Each member of the team bounced the ball off the backboard, then Thompson came up for a mighty slam-dunk. The gymnasium rang with cheers when it hit the mark.

“I missed that shot before,” Thompson remarked with a grin during his turn to speak. He spoke of being the tallest person in his class, of being encouraged to play basketball ... and of being very bad at it.

“But I worked hard at getting better,” he stated. “If you believe, you can achieve.”

He encouraged the students to hang out with people who are doing the right things instead of worrying about hanging out with the “cool crowd.”

HA Leon Sewell told a story about losing a father to alcoholism, but staying strong.

“I am here today because I never gave up on my learning,” he stated. “I was told by friends, ‘You’re not going to make it,’ but I never gave up on my goals.”

Sewell advised the students to look to their parents and educators for guidance when needed.

HA announcer Jimmy Donnell said he had to learn to build his own confidence, having started out life with low self-esteem.

“If no one else was going to tell me I could succeed in life, I had to tell myself,” he admitted, then addressed the students. “You have the tools and the power inside you. Stay positive.”

Hargrove admitted she grew up very poor and felt that because she didn’t have a lot, she didn’t have a lot to offer. “I didn’t love myself,” she said. “You have to love who you are.”