

Auberle kids get motivated



— Photo by Michael DiVittorio/Daily News

Motivational speaker Jon Pritikin demonstrated feats of strength to Auberle Education Center seniors Tachelle M. and Jeron M. after an assembly Thursday afternoon.

By MICHAEL DIVITTORIO
Daily News Staff Writer

Students at Auberle Education Center in Homestead got to “Feel the Power” from a motivational speaker.

Jon Pritikin, founder of Feel the Power, a program that addresses bullying and peer pressure, visited the alternative education center along Ninth Avenue Thursday afternoon. His visit was made possible by the National Character Education Foundation and Allegheny County Pretrial Services.

Pritikin spoke about what it was like to be shunned in school, and how he overcame a speech problem, childhood hardships and being bullied.

“If I can make it, you can make it,” he told the students. “Don’t ever give up ... we need you. You are making a difference.” The foundation serves as an educational facility for troubled youths in grades six through 12 hailing from 15 different school districts.

Pritikin’s message about working hard, overcoming life’s obstacles and the benefits of having good character hit home with seniors Tachelle M., 17, from Woodland Hills School District, and Jeron M., 18, of West Mifflin Area School District.

“There’s times that people would be talking down on you and you’d be wanting to say stuff,” Tachelle said. “You really can’t say (anything). I might be loud sometimes, but I’m a real quiet person outside of school. I’ll be shy because I don’t like telling people how I feel. While he was telling a story, it really touched me.”

Jeron said he could really relate to some of Pritikin’s examples of hardship, and his message of not giving up on yourself.

“It touched me,” Jeron said.

“Life is too short to be treating people the way that they be treating them, for real,” Tachelle said.

Pritikin also demonstrated feats of strength such as ripping phone books in half and breaking a baseball bat across his knee. He holds the 2009 Guinness Book of World Records title for the tightest circumference of two aluminum frying pans rolled together with bare hands in less than 30 seconds.

“The students were incredible,” Pritikin said after the assembly. “I had a great time. It was definitely an honor to be here.” Pritikin has been delivering his message across the country since 1984, and speaks to about 150,000 students a year in the United States. He also makes some trips overseas.



— Photo by Michael DiVittorio/Daily News

Motivational speaker Jon Pritikin demonstrated feats of strength and talked about the harm of bullying at an assembly at Auberle Education Center in Homestead Thursday.

“I come to Pennsylvania every month now,” he said. “Through the NCEF, they’re the ones that make our schedules when we’re here. They book all the schools for us. They’re a program here based in Zelienople, and they’re here to help out students all throughout Pennsylvania. We plan on coming back into the area. I love the students here in Pittsburgh, Pa. They’re so awesome.” Posters are being hung inside the school as a reminder to the students what they learned at Thursday’s assembly.

Principal Linda Marie Marcolini said having guest speakers gives students another way to learn instead of through general classroom studies.

“To have Jon here, it’s an inspiration,” she said. “A lot of our kids sometimes feel they’re not worth anything, and they’re all special kids. Dynamic speakers like Jon come in here to give the kids hope. I want the kids to know that they’re special. I know they’re very special to me. I want them to continue (to) have that hope that they will be able to do something in their life.

“We’re hoping to keep it going every other month to have speakers come in and speak to our students. After I (saw) the audience today, you could pretty much hear a pin drop in the auditorium. I think it had a powerful message. The students in my building are highly motivated type of kids, and for them to be that quiet, and entertained, and listening to the message that Jon was trying to get across to the students was an awesome experience.” Visit Auberle Education Center’s Web site, www.auberle.org, for more information about the school.

NCEF is a state and federally funded program founded in 2003. Its goal is to deliver unforgettable messages of personal integrity, respect and courage to students, faculty, administration and community members through a variety of programs and speakers.

For more information on that program, visit www.ncef.net.