



Professional speaker & author Paul Vitale speaks with Annalisa Dookie, age seven, in front of a group of 75 Boys & Girls Club members at the 10th Street Recreation Center in Stuart. "The kids give me hope," said Vitale. "They motivate me."

'Ball of energy' eager to motivate Martin County

By Kelly Tyko
staff writer

STUART -- To get his inspiration and motivation, Paul Vitale went to the best.

The Arkansas resident penned hundreds of letters, some to Olympic athletes, CEOs of major companies, actors such as George Clooney and, of course, Donald Trump.

This week, Vitale passed on what he learned from his mentors to Martin County students and community members. The professional speaker and author shared his expertise in six speeches sponsored by CHARACTER COUNTS! and other local organizations.

"Paul shared an important message with our community," said Terri May, director of the character education United Way program.

Vitale visited all four public middle schools and the Stuart branch of the Boys & Girls Club, and met the community Tuesday evening at the historic Lyric Theatre.

The students wanted to know if Paul Vitale followed his own advice. Did the professional speaker and author from Arkansas who told them to make good choices always make good choices himself?

"No, I've made mistakes. We all

do, but I think the important thing is to learn so we don't do it again,"

On Monday afternoon, the

animated speaker, who wrote the book "Are You Puzzled by the Puzzle of Life?" spoke with Boys & Girls Club members, ages 6 to 18, at the 10th Street Recreation Center in East Stuart.

Vitale, 33, spoke of dreams and choices as well as fears and how students shouldn't let them get in the way. He also visited Indiantown Middle, Hidden Oaks Middle, Stuart Middle and Murray Middle Schools during a three day tour of Martin County.

Vitale's presentation, "A Hero Within" at The Lyric Theatre, challenged the audience to find the hero within themselves and spoke about the building blocks children need to succeed.

May said Vitale motivated the community, students and adults alike.

"I want them to be inspired to the point that they really carry his message with them when they're faced with tough choices," she said.

At the Boys & Girls Club, Vitale had a chance to get personal with the students.

One student asked if Vitale ever used drugs.

"No, and I don't plan on it," he answered. "Nothing good could come of it."

Malik Clark, a third-grader at J.D.

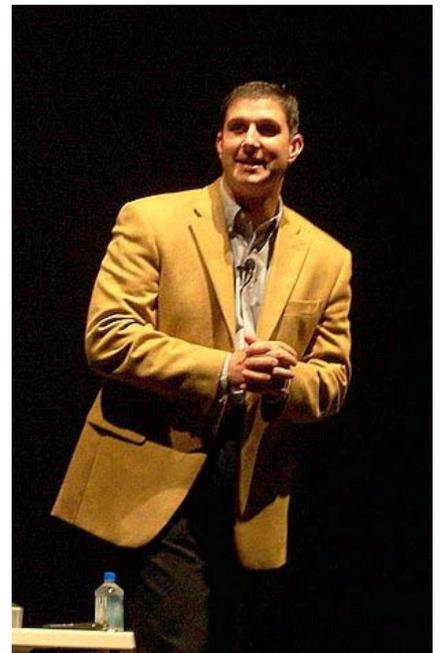
Parker School of Science, Math & Technology, was glad to hear that.

"That was a smart move," the nine year-old said.

Anne McCormick, an area director with the Boys & Girls Club, thought the students gained a great deal from Vitale's speech. "He's a ball of energy," she said. "He captured the attention of the kids. I think they could really relate to him."

Speaking with young people is one of the best parts of his job, Vitale added.

"They give me hope. They motivate me," he said. "They're our future."



Vitale presents "A Hero Within" to packed house at the historic Lyric Theatre.

**Overview of the Paul Vitale
Community Presentations
Shared Services Network/ 21st
Century Grant Component
Martin County, Florida
November 14-16, 2005**

Thanks to excellent community collaboration, students and community members in Martin County had the opportunity to hear presentations by Paul Vitale, a national speaker on character education, during the week of November 14-16, 2005. These **free** community presentations by Mr. Vitale were made possible by a joint venture between CHARACTER COUNTS!, Shared Services Network, Safe and Drug Free Schools, the Children's Services Council of Martin County, the MC Interagency Coalition, the 21st Century Grant and the Lyric Theatre. Mr. Vitale's presentations concentrated on the impact of character education and the power of increasing student's protective factors by promoting the Search Institute's (www.search-institute.org) research on building developmental assets in youth.

Mr. Vitale addressed approximately **1700** middle school students at Indiantown Middle, Stuart Middle, Hidden Oaks Middle and Murray Middle School. His topic, *Are you Puzzled by the Puzzle of Life?* takes the concepts outlined in his national best-selling book, *Are You Puzzled by the Puzzle of Life?*, and gives students the roadmap for making sense of this life-puzzle. Paul shows in a dynamic presentation the four basic concepts that enable students to solve this puzzle: (1) you can't finish unless you begin; (2) perception is reality; (3) all you have is your name; (4) you only live once. Paul accentuates for students how the puzzle pieces fit. Each presentation was approximately 1-1.5 hours and included time for students to ask questions. It is especially

noteworthy to mention that Shared Services Network has made a commitment to increase efforts on behalf of our middle school students in the area of reduction of substance use. This excellent presentation assisted students to understand the role that they play in their own destiny.

Mr. Vitale also made a stop at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Martin County 10th Street Recreation Center after school program to speak with approximately **125** students at that site. The audience included mostly elementary school students with several middle school students also present. Paul spent the better part of this presentation time interacting with his audience and answering questions posed by the students in attendance. The staff and students at the site raved about the information that Paul shared during his hour at the site.



Paul Vitale with members of the Shared Services Network in Stuart, Florida.

The major highlight of Paul Vitale's visit to Martin County was an evening presentation to teens, parents and community members at the Lyric Theatre on November 15. *A Hero Within*, the topic of the evening, accentuated the fact that every person has the capacity for heroism. Paul Vitale showed the audience how to find expression for that capacity. Whether members of the audience think of themselves as heroes or not, Paul showed through his personal experience how we all can liberate our own inner heroism. Mr. Vitale showed how he left the world of corporate job security at the age of 26 to

travel alone across the country to promote his best-selling book; *Are You Puzzled by the Puzzle of Life?* Through his experiences with people from the corporate board room to a homeless shelter, Paul encountered the seeds of heroism, and this seminar showed parents and teens how to achieve heroism on many levels. Paul challenged each attendee to find that hero within themselves. This 90 minute presentation attracted over **260** community members. The audience included children as young as four years old to seniors as old as eighty years old. Regardless of their age, Mr. Vitale engaged all the audience members. Paul's presentation accentuated "the hero within" or the power that all people have to build character and developmental assets in our youth. The in-kind donation of the Lyric Theatre, the venue for the evening presentation, was undoubtedly one of the reasons that the event was so successful.

Of special note is the fact that the Martin County School District allowed teachers or administrative staff persons who attended any of the Paul Vitale presentations to receive in-service credit toward recertification.

Mr. Vitale's presentations were so powerful that the planning committee will be brainstorming ways to find the funding to ask Paul to return to the county. There have been numerous requests for future presentations for the inmates at the Sheriff's Department Boot Camp, youth involved in the Youth Drug Court and students at local high schools. The Shared Services Network Steering Committee will be working with the planning committee to make these opportunities available to local youth in the future.

*Submitted by Donna Hosang
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