

Peer leaders

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Linda Cancer Fund, which assists families battling cancer. On a question of how serving in the military helped him with his career, Nocito said the experience gave him discipline, a work ethic and a good mindset. "Whatever you want to do, you can do it," he said.

Panelist Lakeisha Davis began her career as a Class II police officer in Sea Isle City and works as a detective with the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office. She has worked in the narcotics unit, special victims unit and is currently assigned to the litigation unit. Davis volunteers to attend presentations to promote anti-bullying and anti-drug use to schools and organizations. On a question of what personality trait led to her success, Davis said she was a people person no matter what type of situation she encountered.

Panelist Christine Winans attended Elon University, initially studying theater and later decided to major in international business leading her to study in China where she learned Mandarin Chinese. She worked in aerospace and currently is working in the pharmaceutical industry as a commercial sourcing manager. On a question of whether she knew what she wanted to do after graduating from high school, Winans said she wanted to be on Broadway while in high school, switching from theater to accounting in college when she realized she did not want to wait tables her entire life.

"Then I switched over to special education, then I switched over to trying to be a doctor and then I switched to business information technology and then finally I landed on international business," she said.

Winans said it was ok to not know what you want to do. She said she always maintained core requirements and graduated on time.

Each panelist was asked what was their greatest accomplishment in life. Davis said her greatest accomplishment was raising her two children and setting them on the right path.

Belasco said his service in the Peace Corps was his greatest achievement, spending two years in West Africa, learning the language and meeting new friends.

Nocito said his greatest achievement was his family, his wife and three sons.

Winans said her greatest achievement was receiving an award this year for being in the top 10 graduates of her college for helping 200 kids get jobs.

"I really think it's about paying it forward and always to maintain a relationship with those younger than you," she said.

"As you help other people become successful, you'll become successful in turn," continued Winans.

Chiarella said her greatest achievement was following her passion.

"Even though people told me I couldn't do it, I couldn't be on TV, I never gave up. So that's one thing I've never done. I never give up, I always fight," she said.

On a question of what piece of advice the panelists would give the students, Winans said any time she failed or faced adversity, she took it as leverage to do better.

Nocito said it does not matter where you come from or whether you are rich or poor, everyone can get the same equal advantage. He advised students to find an occupation they enjoy and focus 100 percent on that goal and let no one stop them.



Peer Leadership Conference panelists Mario Nocito, Mia Chiarella, Lakeisha Davis, Christine Winans and Peter Belasco take a break during the annual event at the Wildwoods Convention Center, where they shared their wisdom with students from around the region.

Belasco advised students to explore the "big world" and get outside their comfort zones and take advantage of all opportunities afforded to them.

"The world's full of a lot of adventure and great experiences, don't be scared to put yourself out there and explore," he said.

Chiarella said her advice was about the proper mindset. "If you believe, you can achieve," she said.

Surround yourself with positive people and push away anything negative, she offered.

Davis said she "came from nothing and didn't see herself where she is today."

"Don't let anything get in your way, don't let anyone tell you you can't," she said.

Lower Cape May Regional High School peer leaders, social studies teacher Nancy Sayre and special education teacher Frank Ackley ran a workshop entitled "Can You Hear Me Now?" Ackley said the purpose of the workshop was to develop verbal and nonverbal communications skills. Students started with an exercise entitled "Bumper Cars," walking around the room meeting as many people as possible in two- to three-person groups talking about a topic such as a movie recently seen or plans for Thanksgiving.

Cape Assist's Senior Prevention Specialist Temerity Berry held a workshop focusing on skills needed to succeed in high school and through adulthood. In addition, Berry covered the effects substance abuse can have on future plans beyond addiction. She said the hospitality industry was the No. 1 occupation for substance abuse.

"Unfortunately in Cape May County when you're expected to work 90-hour work weeks in the summer, drugs and alcohol can bring you down, so that's a barrier you're going to have to watch," Berry said.

She said young people can leave the county or overcome the barriers here and succeed. Students should take an inventory of what they like and do not like to do, Berry said.

"You should have some sort of idea because people who don't have goals are less likely to succeed in life," she said. "You can't get somewhere if you don't know where you're going."

Berry asked students to

write down their dreams for their life and a goal worksheet. She said a goal needs to be realistic and obtainable. Setting a time limit to achieve a goal is extremely important, she said.

What will achieving a goal cost in time, money and family relationship? asked Berry. She asked students what short-term goals they could set to achieve their big dream and what steps must be taken to get to that point.

"People who learn to overcome barriers and detours are going to go so much further and they are really going to grow through the experience," Berry said.

She said teens may get in their own way by telling themselves they cannot do something. Berry said that fell in line with listening to other people's opinions instead of your own.

Open communication with parents is important, especial-

ly if they have a different idea for your career path, she said.

Berry said no one sets out to be consumed by drugs. She said in high school, some people think certain drugs and alcohol can easily be experimented with "just for fun."

While some are not greatly affected by the experimentation, it's a roll of the dice each time a young person drinks alcohol or uses drugs, including the risk of sexual assault and unintended pregnancies, Berry said.

"All these things are detours and road blocks that can take you away from your goals and your dreams," she said. "So you have to decide is it worth it, is this one night of fun worth it if something goes horribly wrong."

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27	8:33	9:03	1:58	2:51
28	9:21	9:54	2:48	3:41
29	10:09	10:46	3:37	4:32
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1	11:49		5:22	6:17
2	12:37	12:43	6:19	7:09

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Cape May Star & Wave

CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE (ISSN 519-020)
Volume 161 Number 48

Published weekly by Sample Media, Inc., 801 Asbury Ave., #310,
Ocean City, N.J. 08226

Published Weekly (52 times a year)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: By mail for \$39 a year; \$70 for two years; \$20 for six months. Periodical Postage at Cape May Court House, N.J. and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the Cape May Star and Wave, 846 Broadway, West Cape May, N.J. 08204.

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