

MONEY FOR STUDENTS

'Hired' to achieve

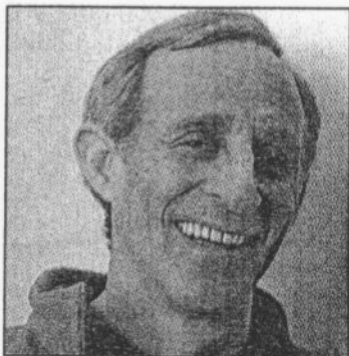
■ **Businessman pledges awards for kids in Farmingdale middle school provided they maintain good grades, attendance**

BY NEDRA RHONE
STAFF WRITER

It was almost 12 years ago when Jeffrey Rosmarin issued his first challenge to a group of 46 middle schoolers in Westbury.

To the auditorium full of children, some accompanied by stunned parents, he said, "I pledge to give you the intellectual, emotional and financial support to stay in school and if you are successful in graduating high school, I will pay for your college tuition."

With that, Rosmarin came to sponsor Westbury Middle School through the "I Have a Dream Foundation" established in 1981 by businessman



NEWSDAY PHOTO / MICHAEL E. ACH

JEFFRY ROSMARIN has pledged to help students.

Eugene Lang.

Today, Rosmarin, a successful real estate businessman based in Plainview, is making a similar pledge, this time in Farmingdale with a slightly different twist. Students at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School who volunteer for the "S" for Success Program have the chance to be "hired" by Rosmarin. Their job is to go to school, do their schoolwork, avoid any disciplinary prob-

lems and maintain good attendance and good grades.

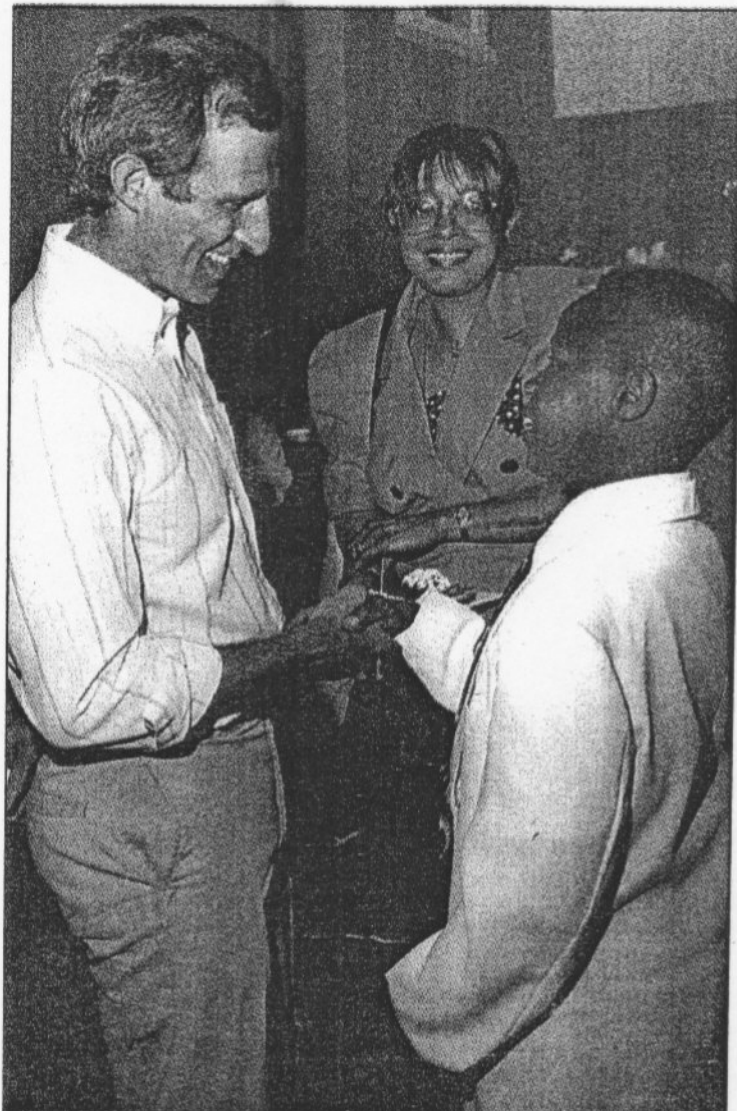
They must solicit biweekly progress reports from their teachers, which they will then show to Rosmarin in exchange for a stipend. Every 10 weeks, when grade reports are issued, Rosmarin will award students a bonus based on their performance. "They are at risk of losing their jobs if they can't live up to their responsibilities," Rosmarin said.

The awards, which Rosmarin would not disclose, will be at his discretion but students are required to put at least 10 percent of their "income" into savings accounts at a local bank. If they save more, Rosmarin will match up to 30 percent.

"That's actually better," said Syracuse University graduate Taneisha Salesman, 22, one of Rosmarin's "dreamers" from Westbury. "When we were going, some people started to get lazy. He had to give a lot of people warnings." Back then Salesman dreamed of being either a teacher or a lawyer. Today, she is working in furniture sales and completing her final year at Syracuse Law School. "It was a great experience," she said.

It also was an expensive experience for Rosmarin, who declined to give the amount of money he has devoted to the Westbury program. Reports at the time estimated about \$500,000 in tuition costs alone. Rosmarin did not know offhand how many students have completed college, though he continues to honor financial commitments.

The program "is very, very expensive and a very big commitment for one person," Rosmarin said. "I thought that if I



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A WESTBURY STUDENT, Dwyonne Aikens, right, benefited from Rosmarin's initiative in 1992.

was going to do something again I would tweak it and do something different."

The opportunity came last spring after Rosmarin, who is seeking permits to build commercial property on a Superfund site he owns in Farmingdale, gave a presentation on the potential development to the Farmingdale Breakfast Rotary Club. Several educators at the meeting approached him about starting a similar program in Farmingdale.

"The spirit is not only in financial support, which is lovely, but the spirit of this is in partnership with a school and a business person," said Ellen Kramer, administrative director of the Farmingdale School district.

Currently, four students

have volunteered for the program, Rosmarin said. The students, whose names were not made available yesterday, completed an application with information on their backgrounds, hobbies, likes and dislikes and were interviewed by a panel of faculty members and Rosmarin.

School officials and Rosmarin later met with parents to explain what is expected. "If the parents aren't supportive, you don't have a program," Rosmarin said. He hopes today's kickoff celebration at the school creates a supportive atmosphere. "I want them to feel like they are part of the same team," Rosmarin said, "part of the same company."