

Students 'Hired' to achieve

'S' for Success Program in Farmingdale

A local businessman pledges awards for kids in Middle School



At last month's Chamber meeting, Jefry Rosmarin, a local businessman, enthusiastically reported on the beginning of a new education awards program called "S" for Success, aka Earn and Learn.

This program is a collaborative effort With Rosmarin and the Farmingdale School District. The program will work with middle school students and encourage them to succeed in school with a unique work/incentive program. Rosmarin will "hire" each student as an "employee" and the employee will commit to specific requirements as to schoolwork, behavior, attendance, timeliness and bi-weekly meetings with Rosmarin, the "employer." Failure to meet these standards could lead to suspension without pay or termination. The awards will be at Rosmarin's discretion and students are required to put at least ten percent of their "income" into an Education Savings Account at a local bank. If they save more, Rosmarin will match up to thirty percent.

This is Rosmarin's second Long Island school-based initiative working with students. In 1992, he sponsored forty-six Westbury fifth graders as part of an "I Have a Dream" ("IHAD") class. The IHAD Program provided tutoring, mentoring and curriculum enrichment with the goal of having the students graduate from high school and a commitment to pay for tuition for college or vocational school.

The Westbury IHAD class achieved a high school graduation rate of over ninety-five percent, far better than the rest of the class. Approximately seventy-five percent of the graduates went on to receive scholarships from Rosmarin to attend college or vocational school.

The new program was first discussed last spring when Rosmarin gave a presentation to the Farmingdale Breakfast Rotary Club on the potential re-development of the Liberty Site. Several educators at the meeting knew of Rosmarin's Westbury "I Have a Dream"

Program and approached him about starting a similar program in Farmingdale.

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Taneisha Salesman, a Westbury graduate and one of Rosmarin's original dreamers thought the new program might be better. "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.

The Westbury program required a minimum ten year commitment and estimates of the costs exceeded \$500,000. "I was disappointed that no one else started another IHAD class after I did, but IHAD was very expensive and a major time commitment," said Rosmarin. "I hope that this new program will be easier to replicate. It combines many of the positive factors that eleven years of working with an IHAD class taught me."

As an example, school officials and Rosmarin met with parents to explain what is expected. "If the parents aren't supportive, you won't have a successful program," said Rosmarin. "Currently, four students have volunteered for the program," Rosmarin said. The students completed an application with information on their backgrounds, hobbies, likes and dislikes and were interviewed by a panel of faculty members and Rosmarin. The kickoff celebration at the school helped create a supportive atmosphere. "I want them to feel like they are part of the same team - part of the same company," Rosmarin said. "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 Krammer, administrative director of the Farmingdale School district.

That some philanthropist would pay students \$5 a day plus bonuses for getting to class on time, staying out of fights and keeping their grades up might strike some as the makings of a great reality show. Yesterday, four eighth-graders at Weldon E. Howitt Middle School in Farmingdale were assured that the deal was no show but rather reality itself. "I started thinking, wow! I could do really good in school...," said one of the selected students, Matthew Delano, 14 of Farmingdale, who also said one of his goals was to lift his test grades this year from the 70's to the 80's or 90's.