



Becky Hirn photo

Troy Evans, a former bank robber and nationally known motivational speaker, answers questions from students at Delphos St. John's Thursday after his presentation "From desperation to dedication, lessons from the big house to your house." This week, Evans visited six area high schools to share his story.

Former prisoner spreads message to local students

By BECKY HIRN
The Delphos Herald

LIMA — From corporate America to local high schools, Troy Evans has something to share.

Evans, former bank robber and now a nationally known motivational speaker and author, visited six area high schools this week for a presentation entitled, "From desperation to dedication, lessons from the big house to your house." Evans visited Vantage, Van Wert, Jefferson, St. John's, Lincolnview and Crestview high schools.

"I think it's important they hear my message. I love to come and talk to youth," Evans said.

Evans was sentenced to 13 years in prison after being convicted of five armed bank robberies in three states over a six-month period. He was released in 1999, seven and a half years later.

For the last four years, Evans has been speaking to people across the nation about his experiences in the federal prison system. He's talked to bankers, education associa-

tions, human resource groups and many others. With the students, the motivational speaker talked about the dangers of peer pressure, substance abuse and the choices people make.

He shared the stories of getting caught and sentenced to prison, race riots, gangs and drugs in prison, how his family life changed, his awakening and his commitment to earning two college degrees while in prison.

Evans said while his presentations change depending on who's listening, his core message always stays the same. He highlighted four central truths including the value of time, the importance of loved ones, faith and the message "It's not important how we come to things in life; it's how we handle it." He's also a firm believer in the theory that things happen for a reason, including his incarceration.

Two St. John's seniors at the presentation Thursday agreed that it was the best they've heard.

"It wasn't a lecture," said April Noonan.

"It was more motivational.

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It just really opened up our eyes," said Kristina Jettinghoff.

Parts of Evans' story even got the students a little teary-eyed. Noonan and Jettinghoff said when Evans talked about his relationship with his son, it was emotional.

The seniors heard Evans presentation twice because they had been at Jefferson High School earlier in the day. They said the message will be with them for a while.

"Listening to how he got his college degree in prison... Now I'm sure I can do it," Jettinghoff said.

"And also that people can change. That's what really stuck with me," Noonan added.

His visit was sponsored by Allen and Van Wert County DARE programs, the six schools he visited, the Van Wert County Foundation and the Abstinence Grant.