



Friday, October 13, 2006 - Karen Clark

Take Pride With Caring Habits Honors Bill Hall



Hasson Heights Elementary School principal Bill Hall (back right) was honored prior to Friday's assembly at Oil City High School with champion basketball handler Charlie Aeschliman. The Take Pride with Caring Habits committee recognized Hall for succeeding with a positive attitude in his battle against leukemia. Aeschliman is pictured in the back with Hall. In the foreground are Seventh Street Elementary School students Samuel Gatesman and Trista Baker. The students are third-grade pupils of John Kluck and were at the high school for the assembly.

A high energy, spirit lifting assembly by champion basketball handler and former U.S. Navy SEAL Charlie Aeschliman was presented Friday to launch the Oil City Area School District Project, Take Pride With Caring Habits - and to honor Bill Hall.

the National Character Education Foundation of Zelenople funded the event to support the Take Pride with Caring Habits school/community project.

This was the first assembly for the Caring Habits program, which provides a monthly theme for reducing bullying by improving relationships at school, at home, at work and in the community. October is "be patient and listen" month, and the caring color is "slow-down" lavender. October's goal is: Find the patience to make more cherished memories out of your moments. The website for the group is www.caringhabits.org.

Aeschliman wowed the crowd with his ball antics, gyrating to an upbeat tempo of music as basketballs swirled on his fingertips. While capturing the attention of the audience with fun and fanfare, Aeschliman had a more serious message to convey to students about believing in themselves, setting goals and having the patience and perseverance to achieve their dreams.

Aeschliman's message to students focused on overcoming odds and obstacles. As students were selected to participate in some of the basketball stunts, Aeschliman continued to deliver his point.

"It's about the small steps you take every day. Doing the right thing at the right time even if no one is watching, that's integrity," he said.

Along with encouraging students to dream and set goals, Aeschliman also said that being patient and persevering through difficult times will lead students to their achievements.

"Nothing takes the place of patience and perseverance - not strength, not talent and not intelligence. There is only ever one true failure and that's giving up on yourself. Don't fear failure, it's a normal part of the experience," he said.

"When I was your age, I fell in love - in love with the game of basketball. I had a dream to be one of the best basketball handlers in the world," said Aeschliman.

Today, Aeschliman is considered by many experts to be one of the best basketball handlers in the world. He was crowned the Nike National Basketball Handling Champion, has entertained hundreds of thousands of fans during NBA and NCAA halftime shows, including the NCAA Final Four, and has been featured on ESPN. In addition, he served as one of the top military instructors in the elite Navy SEALs.

In an interview following the presentation, Aeschliman said he was grateful for the opportunities in his life that have allowed him to reach so many children each year.

"I just wanted to take my experience of achieving my goals and share that with other people. I want to talk to as

many kids as I can," said the 48-year old Steubenville, Ohio, resident. Although his days of four to five hours of practicing with a basketball may be far behind, Aeschliman says he still must brush up to maintain the fine-tuning and timing of the exercises.

Any school districts interested in Caring Habits, the basketball program or any of the staff development or self-esteem programs offered can contact David Rettig at the National Character Education Foundation or at www.ncef.net.

Monies are available through grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to provide the program at no cost to the district, said Rettig.