

Toledo Blade

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Lawyer relates to Mayfield kids

Hasan Davis looked at the students in old Mayfield School, run by Harbor Behavioral Healthcare and Toledo Public Schools for students with severe behavior problems, and saw a younger version of himself in several of them.

"I saw myself several places, especially the two guys in the back who were too cool for it all," Mr. Davis said with a smile after his 30-minute speech. "That was definitely me."

Yesterday's trip to Mayfair was the first of three Toledo engagements for Mr. Davis, a lawyer in Berea, Ky., and chairman of Kentucky Gov. Paul Patton's advisory group on juvenile justice. Mr. Davis said he can relate to the students because he grew up as one of them.

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Mr. Davis was diagnosed with dyslexia and attention deficit disorder as a child, landing him in alternative schools, like Mayfair, for nearly all his primary schooling. He wasn't allowed to graduate from any high school in the Atlanta area because of his behavioral problems.

"You have the right and the ability to be successful," Mr. Davis told his audience of mostly students and staff at the school. "But you can't just talk the talk. You have to walk the walk.

"People have always responded to action more than talk," he said.

Mr. Davis said after he earned his GED in 1985, his mother was one of the few people who still believed he could do something with his life. He said the will not to disappoint her anymore led him to Berea College in Kentucky, which had a program to help troubled teens get a college education. He graduated from Berea with a bachelor's degree in oral communications in 1992.

Mr. Davis earned his law degree from the University of Kentucky college of law in 1996.

He was invited to speak on behalf of the Lucas County Mental Health Board's Youth of Color Task Force. The task force was established in April in response to the statistic that 82 percent of the county's juveniles bound over to stand trial as adults for violent and serious offenses were African-American and Hispanic males.

The task force develops goals and strategies to better serve minority youth in the mental health and juvenile court system. Mr. Davis will speak to task force members on how to better serve minority families during a luncheon at the mental health board offices, 701 Adams St., from 1 to 2 p.m. today.

He will wrap up his Toledo visit today with a community forum at the Zenobia Shrine Center, 1511 Madison Ave., from 6 to 9 p.m.



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