

Motivational speaker addresses students at Annie Camp

By Sherry F. Pruitt

JONESBORO — Every one of the 400 eighth- and ninth-grade Annie Camp Whirlwinds assembled in the gymnasium Friday afternoon has potential, and a motivational speaker, a native of Russellville, was on hand to encourage them to find and use it.

The Crowley's Ridge Service Education Cooperative in Harrisburg invited Paul Vitale, professional speaker, author of three books and writer of curriculums used in the classroom, to speak to students and student leaders at 13 schools in Northeast Arkansas, including Annie Camp Junior High School in the Jonesboro district.

"We're all heroes in some form or fashion," Vitale said. "I am speaking to you as adults, young leaders. You have the capacity and ability to lead day in and day out."

He urged students to recognize and unleash their potential. Vitale encouraged the eighth- and ninth-graders to think about their lives in

the new year.

"Go out and lead by example, and do it in a positive way ... so people want to be around you. To be cool is to be different, and to be different is to lead by example," he said. "Today at Annie Camp Junior High School, you have the potential to better yourself for the future. The world is truly the limit."

Vitale, now of Little Rock, instructed ninth-grader Torre Thompson to squirt some toothpaste on the palm of his hand in front of the assembly and then to try and put the toothpaste back in the tube. The point, he said, was that some things can't be taken back.

"What you do and say matters," he said. "You have choices, and they follow you everywhere you go."

Vitale asked two students — ninth-grader Brittany Webb and eighth-grader Justine Sparks — to join him on the gym floor. He



Paul Vitale, a motivational speaker and founder of Vital Communications, Inc., talks with Annie Camp Junior High School seventh-graders Emily Cannon and Katie Calderon on Friday. Vitale, a Little Rock resident, will speak at more than a dozen schools as part of an initiative sponsored by the Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative.

recognized them for their efforts in leading other Annie Camp students in the Reading Enhances Academic Development program. He said he saw their names on a bulletin board in an Annie Camp hallway.

"Surround yourself by the right people and make good choices," he said.

The speaker also encouraged the students to have integrity.

"Always think about the consequences," he said. "If you screw up, apologize and take responsibility. You learn lessons. If you are going to lie, the odds are you'll get caught. If you make a mistake, it's how you handle it. When you say

or do something, it's out there."

In addition, junior and high school peers will leave impressions on friends and acquaintances, he added.

Vitale gave some words of advice to the student athletes, band members, artists and other students.

"Chase your dreams, but have a plan B," he said.

Kathi Turner, coordinator for Career and Technical Education for Crowley's Ridge Co-op said the program at Annie Camp and another dozen schools in an eight-county area was funded by Carl Perkins federal funds.

In addition to speaking to the eighth- and ninth-grade student body, teachers chose some 70 seventh- through ninth-graders, who are class, organization and club officers and leaders to sit for an additional two-hour session with Vitale, said Nena Edmonds, family and consumer science instructor at Annie Camp. ■