

Speaker urges students to be heroes

BY SHERRY F. PRUITT

JONESBORO — Motivational speaker Paul Vitale of Little Rock made a second visit to Annie Camp Junior High School Friday afternoon.

The Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative in Harrisburg funded Vitale's 40-minute speaking engagement in front of seventh- and eighth-graders in the Annie Camp gymnasium. Vitale, a graduate of Russellville High School and the University of Central Arkansas, is an author of three books and writer of curriculums used in the classroom. He has been speaking professionally for 15 years.

Vitale last visited Annie Camp in March for the first of a 3-session visit. His message Friday was for students to find the hero within, reiterating the message of "daring

to dream courageously." Students were told to establish a course of action based on tomorrow's choices, to surround themselves with positive people and to believe "in the power of imagination."

"It's all about being resilient and not giving up," Vitale said.

Vitale, the founder of Vital Communications, Inc. encouraged the eighth- and ninth-graders to think about their lives in the New Year. He carried his message a step further, urging the youngsters to perform customer service and engage in quality customer care. Most of the students will one day work in jobs where they will be required to have customer service skills and it's never too early to learn that, Vitale said.

"It's important to maintain eye contact,

mind your manners and control the tone of your voice," Vitale said. "The program is designed to educate and inspire them to be motivated, chase their dreams and perform good customer service."

Vitale encouraged the students to feel good about themselves and influence others. The future of the country and the world is in their hands, he said.

Time in Northeast Arkansas

Annie Camp was one of many stops for Vitale in the next couple of months. He is scheduled to speak to students and student leaders at 13 schools in Northeast Arkansas.

He spent about 40 minutes in the full assembly, followed by a two hour break-out session with student leaders and at-risk children in the Annie

Camp library.

Vitale said his program, "A Hero Within," includes the phases of working with one's internal hero, customer service and presentation skills.

"Customer service challenges them to do their best to improve," Vitale said. "A simple smile goes a long way."

The Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative sponsors the event to help promote high school graduation rates and life skills, said Kathi Turner, coordinator for career and technical education at the co-op. Turner said Vitale has an important message for junior high school students.

"The ninth-grade year is critical," Turner said. "So many kids get lost." ■