HVCC inspires, motivates incoming students during Women's Empowerment Day

By Danielle Sanzone, Troy/The Record
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troy >> Inspiration and motivation were two key topics discussed at the inaugural Women’s Empowerment Day at HVCC, which had about 50 incoming freshman women attend.

The event featured workshops, a panel discussion, and several speakers from various walks of life.

My’Asia Colon, vice president of the HVCC student senate, said she was inspired by her mother.

“When I think of women empowerment, I think of my mom,” said Colon, who hopes to transfer to George Washington University after her time at HVCC.

She talked to the crowd about how her mom, a single mother, went back to school to better herself but eventually ended up in an abusive relationship. Her mom was able to get out of that situation and has since also gone back to school at Siena College.

“No matter what happens to you, you can still do amazing things,” said Colon to the group at the Bulmer Telecommunications Center.

The event was organized when Jessica Gilbert at the Center for Academic Engagement pointed out that there was a Male Leadership Day at the school and therefore there should also be a similar offering for the incoming women at the college.

“I was lucky in that I grew up in a community of women who inspired me and were great role models,” said Gilbert, a college success specialist at HVCC. “We wanted to gather these women here to help support them, inspire them, and motivate them.”

Citing small percentages of women in elected office and in leadership roles in large corporations, she said there still was a long way to go.

“We had some today ask if they really can have both - a family and a career,” said Gilbert.

Speakers Friday included Elaine Houston from WNYT, Marissa Lanchak from FLY92.3, Joyce Chupka with Vision Power Consulting, and Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino.

Kiana Aikens, 19, is a recent graduate of Lansingburgh High School. She is going into the HVCC Nursing program.

“I learned to set goals and stay focused,” said Aikens, who added that she also felt less nervous about making the transition from high school to college and starting at HVCC this fall.

Dr. Lucille Marion, vice president/executive director of the Educational Opportunity Center, told the participants that they had to OWN IT which stood for Opportunity, Wisdom, Nurture, Initiative, and Transfer.

“The first step is usually the most difficult to take... but then one tomorrow becomes 100 tomorrows in a blink of the eye...,” said Marion. “When you get past the inertia of the first step, the rest usually falls into place.”
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