

## Speaker tells students they carry a strong influence

by Chris Kieffer/NEMS Daily Journal

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TUPELO - A motivational speaker told students throughout Lee County this week about the influence they wield.

"As an eighth-grader, you as a man or as a woman are a person of influence," Jeffrey Dean told students at Tupelo Middle School on Thursday afternoon. "There is someone watching you. The question isn't, 'Do you have influence,' the question is, 'What is your influence?'"

Parkgate Pregnancy Clinic brought Dean to speak to eight schools in the county throughout the week. Other stops for the speaker, counselor and author included Guntown Middle School, Tupelo Christian Preparatory School, the Tupelo alternative school, Plantersville Middle School, Mooreville Middle School, Tupelo's School-Aged Mothers program and Tupelo High School.

His speeches varied, but his message centered on students' influence and on it never being too late for them to do right.

"I want them to realize you are blessed every day you draw a breath," he said. "All of us have a scarred past, but all of us have a chance to move beyond that past."

This was the first time Parkgate has brought a speaker to local schools, but Parkgate Community Health Director Jima Alexander said the organization hopes to do so more often in the future. Parkgate volunteers also will teach sex education classes in Tupelo and Lee County schools this year.

"At Parkgate, our whole focus is on youth," Alexander said. "We believe one thing they need is encouragement. We brought Jeffrey here to give them a message of hope and to motivate them to have the best year.

"We want them to know they are people of influence and that someone is watching them."

Speaking to a group of eighth-graders at Tupelo Middle School on Thursday afternoon, Dean addressed students' feelings of inadequacy, the dangers of drugs, the harm of negative words and the need for men to treat women with respect. He also spoke to the school's seventh-graders.

"I thought it gave good advice and it said how you should trust people that you love and you should make good choices that will help with your life," said eighth-grader William Bradford, 13.

Fellow eighth-grader Tamara Crump, 13, said if everyone followed Dean's advice, the world would be a much better place.

"It was very inspiring," she said.

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### **On The Web**

For more on Jeffrey Dean, visit [www.truthforschools.com](http://www.truthforschools.com) and [www.facebook.com/iamjeffreydean](http://www.facebook.com/iamjeffreydean).

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