Gold medalist overcomes hurdles for succeed

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

One successful athlete is spreading the message that hard work pays off.

Olympic gold medalist Derrick Adkins visited BronxWorks Classic Community Center to speak to kids from two BronxWorks summer programs about perseverance on Monday, July 28.

I learned that to succeed in life, it takes a lot of hard work.

Derrick Adkins

Adkins, who won gold in the 400-meter hurdle event in 1996 at the Atlanta Olympic Games, travels to schools and summer programs all across the city with the New York Road Runners Youth and Community Services.

Since his athletic career ended, he has concentrated on giving back, recognizing the importance positive role models and community organizations played in his own success.

“I look to be the person to inspire the next generation of young people,” said Adkins.

Adkins told his audience of 5 to 12-year-olds about his long road to the Olympics, starting with a community track team at age 7. He said he was an average kid until his grades went up to stay on the team.

It was only after he had his mechanical engineering degree in hand did he concentrate exclusively on running, he said.

“School comes first,” he said.

Teamwork is also important to being successful, Adkins told the kids. He characterized teamwork as being nice, helpful, and not selfish.

“I’m not just talking about sports, I’m talking about teamwork in life,” he said. “It will help you grow.”

He knows the messages he’s trying to get across to the kids are the same things their teachers or counselors are telling them, said Adkins.

“But sometimes it’s good for someone from the outside world to come in and reinforce that message,” he said.

BronxWorks director Eileen Torres said that she felt Adkins would be an inspiration to the kids at the center, showing them how it’s possible to achieve your dreams through hard work.

“To see someone who looks like them achieve something as fantastic as an Olympic gold medal encourages them to reach for the stars,” said Torres.

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