

Weather

Mostly cloudy today with a chance of flurries; high 28, low 22

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NECC Tournament

Westview teams fall in championships

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Generations

Businessman John Atz believes in family, community

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One More

Colts face Patriots today

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THE NEWS-SUN

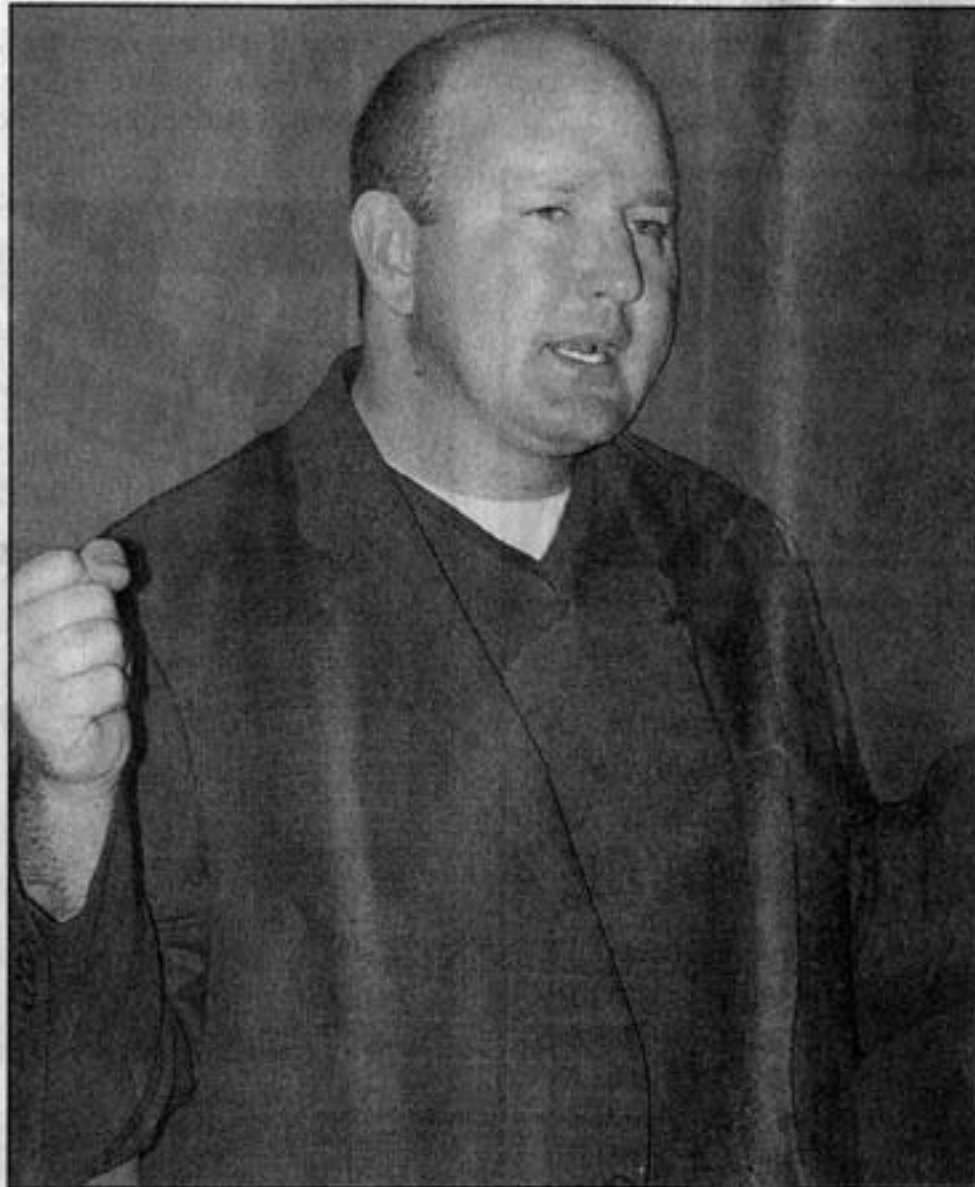
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Ex-robber speaks to educators



BILL GISEL

Troy Evans addresses teachers and support staff of the Four County Area Vocational Cooperative Saturday morning at Ceruti's Banquet Hall in Kendallville.

BY BILL GISEL

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KENDALLVILLE — How do you get the attention of 40 groggy people on a Saturday morning?

Troy Evans put on a stocking mask and pointed an automatic pistol at them.

Evans is a motivational speaker with a unique background: He was a drug addicted bank robber who spent seven and one-half years in a federal prison.

His audience of teachers and support staff of the Four County Area Vocational Cooperative Saturday morning at Ceruti's Banquet Hall heard Evan's message for teachers and educators, which included his praise for the people "who work in the most noble of all professions" as educators of children.

Evans, of Phoenix, said he was raised with all the moral values put before him by a loving and successful family, but once he had a taste of drugs, his addiction became the driving force in his life.

"I did the only thing I could after high school - I dealt drugs,"

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EX-ROBBER: 2 of Evans' 4 truths are to set goals, value loved ones

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he said. He managed to marry and have a son, but he said he "hurt and discarded" them in a selfish quest for the perpetual "high".

Ultimately, he turned to robbing banks, knocking off five in a six-week period.

When he was sentenced to 13 years and one month in a federal prison, he said he had an awakening.

"I had to tell my 7-year-old son I was not going to be available to him for a long, long time," he said. "It was then that I had the awakening and realized that I was breaking the chain, that I was not going to be available to my son as my father had for me, and his father had for him."

He said he realized that anything that was worthwhile was not going to be easy, "and I had always taken the easy way." More difficult is the road of self-respect, and knowing and doing the right thing, he said.

"I made a decision that an education would be the means for traveling the difficult road that would lay ahead, and that I would sink my teeth into it," he said.

Mixed with stories of the horrors of prison (he saw a co-worker murdered over a 69-cent ink pen) and his refusal to help smuggle drugs into prison even when confronted by three gang members armed with home-

made knives (a guard approached in the nick of time), Evans told how he wrote hundreds of letters seeking scholarships for college courses before he finally got funding for one class for one semester.

"I sent them my report card, and they sent me a check for two classes; I sent them my report card again and they sent me a check for a full class load," he said.

By the time he left prison, he had earned two degrees with a 4.0 grade point average.

Evans said he believes in four "truths" and the first is that time is the most valued thing in life. "You can't recycle it, when it is gone it is gone," he said.

He said his personal method to manage time is to set goals for every aspect of his life

Second is the value of family and friends. "Let them know that you love them and let them know it often," he urged. "You don't know their value until they are taken away from you."

Third is faith, "believing that there is something bigger than self and that everything that happens in life is for a reason," he said. "We are masters at taking the good things, but we struggle with the bad things."

Fourth is learning to deal with whatever happens without letting it be a hindrance to the future. "Thank God I am not the man I once was," he said.