

ASPIRE program kicks off

By Katisha Draughn, Naval Support Activity Norfolk Public Affairs

More than 85 people watched as young ladies aspired to develop into future leaders during the ASPIRE Program Kickoff Event at the Chesapeake Central Library, March 9.

ASPIRE, which stands for Attitude, Self Esteem, Public Service, Integrity, Responsibility and Empowerment is a unique two-year program with the mission of developing the leadership skills of young women by reinforcing ethics, self esteem, public service and providing access to prominent female role models and municipal officials. The program has 14 participants which consist of two young ladies from each Chesapeake High School.

The ASPIRE program was initiated by the Chesapeake Sheriff's Office after the success of the Children Today, Leaders Tomorrow Program, which is geared towards boys ages 10 - 12 years old from Chesapeake.

"We wanted to take it to the next level and include young ladies from Chesapeake as well," said Col. Jim O'Sullivan, Undersheriff with the Chesapeake Sheriff's Office.

Participants in the ASPIRE program must have a C-grade point average or better and have a two-year commitment (11th and 12th grade academic years) to the program, to include some volunteer hours during the summer and holiday breaks. There are 24 female mentors from the Chesapeake Sheriff's Office who work closely with the young ladies as part of the program.

Commander Ellen Duffy, officer-in-charge of the Naval Support Activity Northwest Annex, serves as the executive board member liaison for the program for Hickory High School.

"I feel so privileged to be a part of the ASPIRE program in connection with the Children Today Leaders Tomorrow program," said Duffy. "This program will expose these young ladies to so many wonderful opportunities. It is also an honor to be working with so many influential women in the Chesapeake area."

The Chesapeake Sherriff's Office contacted Duffy last year to be a leader of a team for the scavenger hunt during the Children Today, Leaders Tomorrow program.

“She was such a pleasure to be around and you can really tell that she has a love for children, so we contacted her right away to be a part of the ASPIRE program,” said O’Sullivan. “She is a positive female role model and she was committed right away to become involved in the program. She has been fantastic.”

This mission of the ASPIRE program will be attained through workshops on communication, self defense, public speaking, self esteem, problem solving/conflict resolution, leadership roles, etiquette/protocol in various settings, local government process, specialized certifications, (CPR/First Aid) and a field trip to Richmond to visit the General Assembly.

“This program also creates a great networking tool for these ladies to interact with future candidates and form those friendships and relationships,” said O’Sullivan.

Also in attendance to show support for the kickoff event were Delegate John Cosgrove, Mayor Alan Krasnoff, Councilmember Debbie Ritter, Councilmember Ella Ward, Councilmember Cliff Hayes, Councilmember Suzy Kelly, Councilmember Scott Matheson, School Board Member Brenda Johnson, School Board Member Harry Murphy and School Board Member Christie Craig.

The young ladies received an ASPIRE shirt and identification card, along with meeting the Executive Board and being placed with their deputy mentors. Upon completion of the program, each of the young ladies will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to the college or university of their choice.

“The Chesapeake Sheriff’s Office has a great program going and I am excited to participate in making a difference in these young women’s lives,” said Duffy.

For more information on the ASPIRE program, contact the Chesapeake Sheriff’s Office at 382-8388.