

Sensational speaker, Matt Bellace, motivates Piner High students to seek natural highs for positive change !

Surround yourself with positive people was on the top of the list for how best to thrive and survive your teenage years in an animated presentation by speaker extraordinaire Matt Bellace. To illustrate this he had a set of girls and boys sit in chairs, then lean against each other and then as he removed chairs to find that they had indeed form a supportive network where each person could depend on the other to keep the group intact. He led us through a mind clearing breathing exercise that he recommends devoting time to each day- a recharge of your brain and a way to take a break from the stressors that have come your way.

Dr. Bellace is a clinical neuropsychologist that uses scientific evidence and a wicked sense of humor to deliver the message to teens that natural highs far outweigh the temporary escape of chemically induced pseudo-euphoria. As he shared the struggles of watching his brother slowly wither from his true potential, Matt used this frustration and anger to build something positive for himself- sports, leadership and positive peers. With like minded people he helped to develop the social networks for those that are clean and sober by choice, with an impressive presence at colleges known for their party atmosphere.

He engaged students throughout his talk such as when Huy Li took the stage to guess the artists and song titles from his ipod. The message was clear and easy to hear- turning to music, whether it's making, listening or dancing to it, are healthy natural ways to lift your brain from anger and anxiety that might make it's way into your life as a teenager. Huy then took the stage to rap along with Eminem to the delight of the crowd !

Next came learning about hobbies our Piner peers do as part of their natural high regime. In an obscure way, he prompted the volunteers to share the details of their pastimes- where does it happen, what equipment do you need etc while he had tasked the audience to listen to their responses as if they were talking about kissing ! So answers like you need a pet , or I do this with my brother had us rolling off of our seats. It was hysterical- like a living mad lib right on stage. As a community we were laughing and collectively it became a better experience that alone- a definite group feel good ! Laughter, helping others and be outdoors were just some of the suggestions Dr. Matt had to better our brains.

Wrapping up with a bit more of the serious stuff were the data driven charts that showed brains shrink when exposed to marijuana- and especially those parts associated with decision making and memory. Also interesting was the graph that showed teenage risk behavior increases exponentially when in groups, rather than alone !! Matt suggested for this reason, students should have a standby reason for removing themselves from groups such as - 'got an early day tomorrow' or ' No thanks, not interested' and the classic truth- ' my parents will kill me if they find out' !

Everyone enjoyed the presentation and many found the message to be timely for a variety of reasons. Teachers that brought their classes are engaged in the campus collective exploration titled " Cerebropalooza" and are studying some aspect of the brain in their individual curricular areas. By having this great community experience with such solid science- teachers have a new avenue to explore with students as well as an affirmation that with more information and examples of how brain and behavior are connected- students can make informed choices about their own actions.

Pictures from the event:

Matt Bellace with students forming the 4

squares of support.



blurry picture of the group , share your favorite past

time