

# Speaker influences local students

March 28, 2012

By KATHLEEN EVANOFF The Niles Times Tribune Chronicle | TribToday.com



David G. Kohout, executive director of Talk Is Cheap Inc., a non-profit organization that works to provide hope in the lives of young people, spoke Monday to middle and high school students at Weathersfield High School. Kohout's message includes convincing all young people that they are amazing no matter what is going on in their personal lives.

# Speaker influences local students

By KATHLEEN EVANOFF The Niles Times Tribune Chronicle | TribToday.com

While recounting his own tumultuous adolescence, David Kohout, executive director of Talk Is Cheap Inc., wanted to leave one message to students in grades fifth through 12th when he spoke to them Monday at Weathersfield High School.

"By the time I'm finished speaking this morning, you'll be able to look into a mirror and say, 'I like me,' " Kohout said.

Coming from a background in sales and sales management, Kohout uses his leadership training to reach out to youth, encouraging them to "see what no one else sees" and to see what everyone else chooses not to see, whether it's out of fear, conformity or laziness.

Once a rowdy teenager himself who was often "stoned, before, during and after school," Kohout turned his life around when he began volunteering his time to work with kids in his church, he said. Shortly after, he started the youth group in his church, and now travels the country helping to impact the lives of more than 175,000 students, staff and academic leaders over the past 21 years. He currently speaks at numerous high schools and middle schools, public and private, throughout northeast Ohio and western Pennsylvania, encouraging students to "be a chooser, not a loser."

During his hour and a half presentation, Kohout told students that every one of them has something going on in their lives. He spoke of students who may or may not be using drugs and alcohol, or who may have parents that struggle with addiction. Citing situations that were both shocking and sentimental, Kohout's message was that each person has a worth and no one is an accident.

"I don't need you to like me," Kohout told the students, "I need you to hear me."

Using a Power Point demonstration on a huge screen that filled the stage in the high school auditorium, Kohout peppered his motivational speech with scenes from the film, "Patch Adams," camouflage drawings that encouraged students to think outside the box and an montage of famous people with clips of their failures to prove they, too, were human and made mistakes in their lives.

"Talk is cheap, but the message isn't. You matter," he said.

"Everyone in this room gets a second chance starting this morning," Kohout said.

Prior to speaking to students, Kohout addressed their teachers on Friday with a shorter version of his presentation.