

# Stay in school

## MLK III stresses education to Kendrick Middle students

By Nathan Isenhardt  
Neighbor Staff Writer

Students at Kendrick Middle School listened intently as Martin Luther King III delivered an address to the seventh-grade graduating class on about the importance of education.

King, the eldest son of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., paid a special visit to the school last Friday to speak to students on about topics ranging from violence to heritage to the use of slang terms.

Using animated gestures and a booming voice, King continually emphasized the importance of education, as well as respect and spirituality.

During his speech, King told students it's important to set goals for themselves and to challenge themselves so they can reach their full potential.

"No matter what we choose to do within our lives, it's very important that we prepare ourselves, and preparation takes a long time, because nothing in life is easy," he said. "But each one of us is a very special entity because God gave each one of us a talent, and when we decide what we want to do with it, we must work to hone that craft, to let it become the best it can become so that we can be-



Staff photos by Jody Bolton

Martin Luther King III addresses students at Kendrick Middle School during the school's end-of-the-year assembly. Student Melvin Carter, whose parents are personal friends of the Kings, was given the duty of introducing the speaker, who spoke on the importance of education.

come our best as well."

According to King, fundamentals such as reading, writing and math are the foundations of that preparation and that having a firm knowledge of one's heritage is important as well.

"Whether you are African American, Latino or Hispanic American, Asian American, European American or Native American, we all must learn our heritage. When we understand that heritage, then we can come together," he said.

King also spoke of his father, who was also committed to education and mastered reading at an early age.

"One of things I want to say to you today, as students, is that it's so important to master reading, for there is nowhere that you cannot go through a book," he said.

He chronicled his father's outstanding academic achievements and civil rights victories, bringing the audience back to a time in 1955 when Rosa Parks sat down on a bus.

He reminded the students of how many options are available to Amer-

icans of all races today, by reminding them at one point African Americans were expected to pay the bus fare at the front of the bus, get back off the bus, and then reboard the bus in the back.

"When the white sections of the bus would fill up, black passengers were told to stand up. Often times black people would deposit their money, get off the bus, and the bus would just drive off. I say this because you can only begin to move forward when you know where you've been," he said.

King went on to speak about the tragedy of his father's assassination and how the spirituality his father had instilled in him prepared him to cope with it and not become bitter toward society.

"I was 10 years old when my father was killed, but we coped because we had been raised with a proper spiritual foundation. We knew that one way or another, it would all work out OK," King said.

Students nodded their heads in agreement when King began speaking of each individual's responsibility to prevent violence in their own lives by making thoughtful choices and not choices driven by hatred.

He ended his address by explaining to students the importance of how the many lessons he has learned in his life, such as the importance of communication, brotherly love and self esteem, have helped him and said he hopes the students learn from his experiences.

The conclusion of his speech was met with a roomful of resounding applause and followed by an enthusiastic question and answer session.

Melvin Carter, who introduced King, said he was impressed by the man's words.

"I thought the speech was definitely OK. I was very satisfied," he said.