

MHS grad: 'People said there was no hope for us'

Speaker:

Motivational speaker at MUM overcomes odds

Kendall C. Wright wasn't wrong. While attending a seminar in Dave Finkelman Auditorium several years ago, Wright decided he wanted to be standing on that stage one day.

That day came Thursday.

A 1978 Middletown High School graduate, Wright, 42, was the keynote speaker for Miami University-Middletown's opening convocation. He touched on a wide range of topics — what he called "aspiration, cultivating and testing" — during his 20-minute motivational speech.

"Today we are celebrating the aspirations of your proud parents," he told about 100 MUM students and faculty. "We are celebrating the hard work that you have put forth already. We are celebrating because the people who said there was no way you would ever go to college were



Rick McCrabb

wrong. Now make the choice to do whatever is necessary to stay here.

"Many experts have proven that expectations create reality. Begin your day expecting something great to hap-

pen to you, in you and through you."

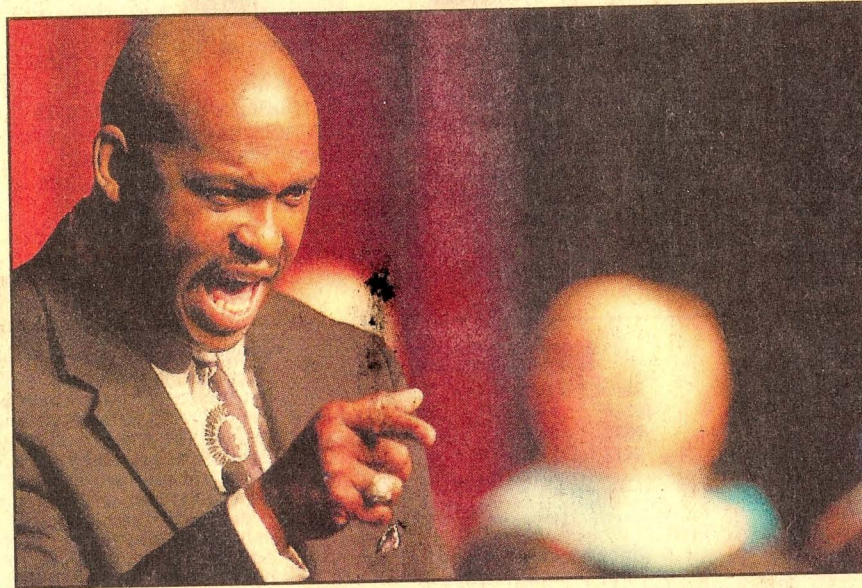
Later, after the auditorium was empty and the students were enjoying a cookout, Wright relaxed in a wooden chair backstage. I asked him if he was excited about addressing college students in his hometown.

"I'm here," Wright said. "I did it."

He grew up on 18th Avenue in the city's South End. He was raised for many years in a single-parent household. He faced long odds. He beat them.

Wright 1, Experts 0.

"People said there was no hope



Pat Auckerman/Middletown Journal

for us," Wright said.

Those people and their national statistics should have heard him Thursday. They would have seen his enthusiasm, the way he stomped on the stage and the nodding of heads and smiles in the audience. They obviously liked

Wright's message.

"That's where I thrive," he said of the stage.

He told a fictional story about meeting an elderly man in an airport. The gentleman was carrying numerous pieces of luggage and his airport tags said "MSD."

When asked, the man told

Wright his luggage was filled with hopes and dreams, ideas he never acted on, kind remarks and apologies he never delivered and risks he never took.

The bus driver asked the man his destination, and he answered: "Maybe some day."

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Motivational speaker Kendall C. Wright addresses the Miami University-Middletown freshman class during its opening convocation Thursday at Dave Finkelman Auditorium. Wright, 42, graduated from Middletown High School in 1978.

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Wright, like most motivational speakers, has a million stories. When he runs out of ideas or needs inspiration, he listens to other motivational speakers or reads his recently published book, "Affirming and Confirming Successful Living."

Wright and his wife, Marva, live in West Chester with their four children. He also serves as associate minister at United Missionary Baptist Church in Middletown.

He earned his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Dayton — where he played football — and his master's degree in human resource development from Weber College in St. Louis. He's founder and president of Entelechy Training and Development Inc.

I asked him how many motivational speeches he delivers a year. He smiled and said, "I have no idea."

Then he added: "Probably one every day. I'll talk to anybody anywhere ... airport, McDonald's, back of a cab ... anywhere."

So he loves talking?

"I love communicating. There's a big difference between words and an actual message."