

Town meeting was outstanding

By Bruce Harrison
Reporter

A standing ovation for the featured speaker, repeated attempts to do a somersault and land on his feet by Dave Gesin, and cheers, applause and lots of information prevailed at a well attended Town Meeting in Forreston April 24.

Mark Durham a middle-aged, Belvidere businessman and nine-year recovering drug addict, was the featured speaker at the April 24 meeting.

He traced his involvement with drugs from his teen years when he first started on cigarettes until he finally evolved to cocaine.

Durham said he started using drugs at age 15 when he started smoking cigarettes.

He called nicotine the single most addictive drug he has ever used and "I've used a lot of them," he said.

Durham said smoking or cigarettes are referred to as the gateway drug because there is a higher drug use among kids who smoke than those who don't.

He said at age 15 or 16, he was also introduced to alcohol and was later placed in a juvenile detention center in Rockford.

He said as a result of using alcohol he lost his drivers license.

Also he said, his closest friend was killed in an alcohol related accident.

Durham said when he was 15-17

he was also introduced to pot, or marijuana.

From there he evolved to hallucinogens, acids and then his favorite, cocaine.

"Using drugs started out being fun. In the end, they brought me to my knees and almost got me killed," he said.

He said he turned the corner to recovery on April 26, 1989, when he walked into a room and the people there told him he was the most important person there.

He declined to give the name or the organization just as he failed to say directly that God had played an important role in his recovery, but he strongly implied this.

"My life was changed. It didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of work. I was granted a miracle in 1989. I am uniquely suited to carry this message," he said.

He said some of the young people present would be offered cigarettes, alcohol, pot and cocaine.

"I find when I make the right decision I don't always have the support of the crowd," Durham said.

He concluded his speech with this comment, "I got better because a group of people loved me into right living."

As Durham walked from the microphone the thunderous applause finally erupted into a standing ovation.

Next to speak was Officer Cheri

Brodzik, D.A.R.E. officer with the Ogle County Sheriff's Department.

She spoke on neighborhood watch programs, crime stoppers and parent trees for spreading information.

Also a teen panel gave testimony on why they are drug free and talked with middle school students after the meeting about remaining drug free.

One of the other highlights of the evening was a promise from meeting moderator and organizer Dave Gesin to do a cheerleader somersault and land on his feet.

Gesin tried the stunt several times, even with the assistance of straps and fellow teachers, but was unsuccessful in landing on his feet.