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Men of Rockland fraternity chapter to mentor boys

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Suzan Clarke
STAFF

SPRING VALLEY -When T. Edward McBride was growing up in Harlem, he said he didn't consider himself "college material."

A bachelor's and a master's in business administration later, McBride, a computer programmer from Nanuet, said he now wants to show young black men that they, too, can go to college and succeed in any career they choose.

McBride has become increasingly concerned about the potential of young black males, particularly those who are less privileged.

That was part of the reason that he thought of launching a mentorship program to teach the practical and social skills essential to success, he said yesterday.

The program, called the Rockland Omega Academy, or ROAD, will involve McBride and fellow members of the Xi Lambda Lambda chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Beginning March 31, 10 members of the fraternity will gather at Finkelstein Memorial Library to mentor 10 local at-risk black and Latino middle school boys, said Dennis McGloster, the chapter's president.

With the men's help, the boys will learn public speaking, computer literacy, Internet skills and etiquette and dress, one Saturday per month through June.

Dress, speech and mannerisms are important to making a good first impression, McBride, the chapter's secretary, said.

Each session will be four hours long, and will consist of instruction, individual and group meetings, and one hour where experts will speak.

That the venture is administered by black men is significant, McGloster, a Hillburn resident who owns a consulting and tax-preparation firm, said.

"African-American men need to step up to the plate. My statement might offend some people, but I really don't care at this point," he said earlier this week.

Many people may be satisfied in donating funds for scholarship breakfasts or dinners, but that is not enough, he said. Many times the children selected as honorees at those events are not the ones who are most in need of help, he added.

"We're quite passionate about this and we're really excited and my ultimate goal is to ... give these boys some direction in their lives," he said. "And they need it from us. They need the black male to step up to the plate."

In addition to the Saturday sessions, the boys will be invited to help administer the blood drives and free community financial seminars organized by the chapter. There also are plans for fishing trips, golf outings and possibly a visit to the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.

Funding for the program has been provided by Orange and Rockland Utilities, state Sen. Thomas Morahan, R-New City, and large corporations, McGloster said.

The support will allow the boys to be mentored at no charge, and will even go towards purchasing what McGloster believes is an essential piece of clothing: a blazer. "When they take trips to the Supreme Court, they're going to have them on. I don't care what the style is nowadays," McGloster said.

Reach Suzan Clarke at snclarke@lohud.com or 845-578-2414.
If you go

What: Opening ceremony for the inaugural session of the Rockland Omega Academy.

When: 10:30 a.m. March 31.

Where: Community room of the Finkelstein Memorial Library, 24 Chestnut St., Spring Valley

Information: Call Dennis McGloster at 845-323-2548.