



## YorkCounts speakers urge education focus

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Terrence Roberts -- one of the nine students who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1954 after the Brown v. Board of Education case -- said York County should always look for ways to improve the community.

"When you know you are doing right, you can always find ways to move forward," he said.

Roberts spoke Thursday at the Yorktowne Hotel during the YorkCounts Annual Summit, as did a senior at the U.S. Naval Academy. Both men said education is the key to success.

The theme for the YorkCounts event was "Educational Opportunities for All," and 45 area high school students were honored for academic achievement, school leadership and community contributions.

Midshipman 1st Class Zerbin Singleton, a senior at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., encouraged students to continue their education. He read a poem he wrote in the beat of a rap. This is the ending:

*" Overcome our past, because today you can begin*

*To save a child, educate a man*

*Live by example and teach the right ways*

*Here's a paintbrush, paint a masterpiece, for no pay."*

The crowd gave him a standing ovation after the reading.

Singleton also shared the story of his life as the son of a single mother. He said he was born addicted to crack, and during his childhood, he was homeless at times and exposed to drugs and domestic violence.

The way out of that life was working hard in school, Singleton said. The aspiring astronaut is set to graduate this year with an aerospace engineering degree, and he was elected by his classmates to be a brigade commander, which is the equivalent to class president.

"In the end, you determine your fate," Singleton said.

Latisha Murray, a 17-year-old William Penn senior, said she wishes Roberts and Singleton could come to her school for a day. Her classmates would be able to connect with Singleton because he is young and overcame hardships they can relate to, she said.

Too often, the focus is on "the city's problems and William Penn drama," said Charissa Moye, an 18-year-old William Penn senior. After considering what Roberts and Singleton lived

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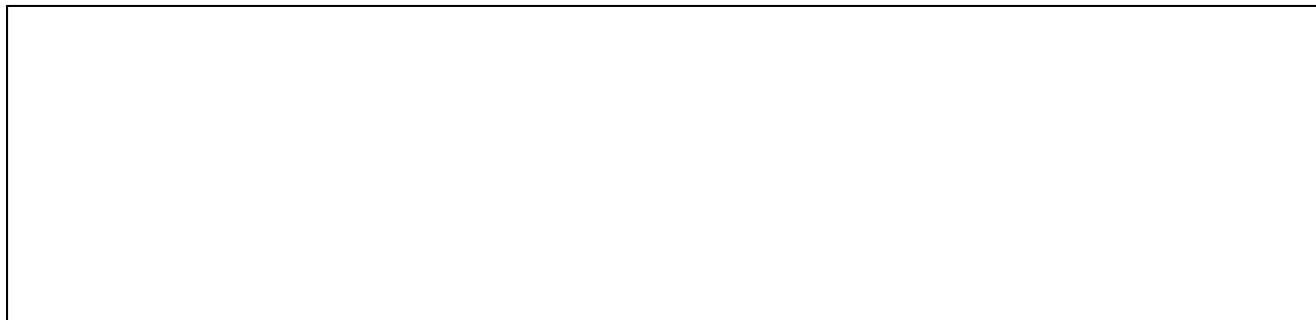
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through, those problems seem surmountable, she said.

"They were very inspirational," Murray said. "It just makes you think about all the opportunities we have."

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