James Best

Prof. Fink/Ziek

Internship Program I

April 5th 2016

Alliance for Safe Kids and Kevin Hines take steps toward saving teens at Save a Life Forum

On Sunday April 3rd 2016 Martin Wilbur, Editor in Chief of the Examiner Newspaper assigned me an event to cover the Save a Life forum hosted by the Alliance for Safe Kids (ASK) at Lakeland Senior High School in Shrub Oak. This focus of this event was to help high school teens and adults to understand the stigmas regarding mental health and empower them to know how to help others dealing with mental health issues. From the time I was assigned this event I knew that it could be something special. One of my favorite things about being a journalist is being able to share stories about people coming together to make a difference in a community. When I arrived in Shrub Oak and stated that I was a reporter for the Pleasantville Examiner immediately I felt welcomed as the people running the event told me about what was going on. I got the opportunity to conduct an exclusive interview with the Keynote Speaker Kevin Hines, a suicide prevention and mental health specialist who told his story of survival after jumping off of the Golden Gate Bridge when he was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. Hines said that the purpose of the event was to try and bridge the gap between fear of mental pain, illness and brain disease with honesty to make a change. He said that he wanted to give people hope because hope helps heal. As a journalist it was important to me to capture the feeling that felt about the topic of mental health and inform the public about the great work that people like Hines are doing to help the community. I wanted to get a perspective from not only him but the President and CEO of ASK Tricy Cushner. Cushner said that because her organization was able to implement a program called Youth Mental Health First Aid Hines was attracted to come to speak. She said that the communities of Yorktown and Lakeland were the first communities to try and do something about the issue of suicide prevention and mental health. That was what was so great. I understand as a reporter you have to be objective and focus on the task at hand however for the moments I was there it was literally one of the best events I have ever covered in my life. I was able to meet so many people that wanted to share their story and how the perceive mental health and issues regarding the topics that were spoken. It really made me reflect back on my time in High School and I wish I would have had an event like this to understand that people were trying to make a change. In fact, I actually met one of the teachers who taught in the elementary school I attended in 2008. When she saw me it I was surprised to see that she was happy for me and the fact that I had become a reporter for a newspaper. She told me that she was going to tell Principal Curran the man who had been the assistant principal for the school during my years there. When your supported by not only the community you are in now but the community you had once been a part of in the past it gives you an inspiration to work even harder. The only downside to meting so many people and getting so much information is that as a reporter only so much can be printed in a newspaper. I only had a limit of about 700 words and normally I like to keep my stories between 300-500 words so that readers do not lose interest in what I am writing. I have to capture one important thing and run with it throughout my story. The important message I captured was the impact of Keynote speaker Kevin Hines on those in attendance. His story was special and something that I’m sure people will be intrigued to know about. My article was published in The Northern Westchester Examiner that gets published in the Yorktown, and Ossining areas. I hope that people read the great things that the Alliance for Safe Kids is doing and that impacts more people to want to make a change in the way they view mental health issues in their community. If I am able to that then my job has been fulfilled.