

# Spider Jones motivates youth to stay in school



**MOTIVATED.** Sports broadcaster and former amateur boxing champion Spider Jones encourages local educators to inspire students and to give them hope.

*Photo by Kristan Jones*

by Kristan Jones

"Without an education you have nothing" was the message Spider Jones brought to Taboo Resort and Conference Centre in Gravenhurst recently, when he attended Trillium Lakelands District School Board's directors' conference.

Jones, a sports broadcaster, former amateur boxing champion, and a motivational speaker, attends about 200 schools a year talking to students about the importance of staying in school.

"We have to keep these kids focused and we have to inspire them," Jones told the educators at the conference. "We have to give them the one thing I didn't have when I grew up. Hope."

Jones was born in Windsor, Ontario and grew up in the housing projects of Detroit. He was one of nine children in his family, which shared a two-bedroom home.

"I didn't have a good life as a kid, that's why I give my

kids a good life," explained Jones. "You shouldn't go through life unhappy, angry and bitter. And I was unhappy."

I flunked twice. Then they put me in the remedial class," said Jones. "The kids called it the ding-dong class and they left me there to

driveways and then break into the homes and "clean house" (steal).

"I didn't care back then and I didn't think back then, because I was angry at the world," Jones did this for three years until he was caught and spent six months in a detention centre. He spent about six years in jail, on and off.

"Every time I got out of jail I would hang out with the same guys and get sent back to jail."

At age 26, Jones had had enough.

In 1967, Jones left Detroit and moved to Toronto where he worked at a "sleazy hotel."

He then met his wife, Jackie Robinson.

"She changed my life and I started to live for something," said Jones. His wife encouraged him to go back to school.

Four years later, Jones graduated from Seneca (Please see 'Slaying' on page B3)

*'You need to believe in them, because maybe they aren't getting it in school'*

- Spider Jones

He talked of growing up in a home which was freezing in the winter and sweltering hot in the summer and he spoke of the death of his 18-month-old brother. Jones was six-and-a-half years old at the time.

"It freaked me out," said Jones. "After that I was so afraid of the dark, I didn't have a good night's sleep until I was 18."

As Jones found out, children can't absorb information if they are always tired.

"When I was in grade three

rot."

At the age of 13 Jones started playing hooky.

"I wanted to be in the streets. I wanted to be like my cousin Sonny," he added.

"When I was 14, Sonny asked if I wanted to make some money. He took me to this side street and I became their lookout. I made \$8," said Jones. "That's when I was introduced to the 'house cleaning service.'"

He explained that on Friday evenings Sonny's gang would look for empty