Inspiring leadership in youth

One-day POINT Conference provides skills, knowledge and motivation

JASON BROWN
Special to the Sun

GODFREY
Speaker

EVANS
Speaker

DAGNINO
Speaker

UMEH
Speaker

Ever wondered what it would be like to be the prime minister of Canada and lead a G8 nation?

Or dreamed of being the captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs and leading the franchise to their first Stanley Cup win in almost 40 years?

Perhaps you'd like to be the president of a company, rather than a country, or the captain of your school team, as opposed to the Leafs.

Wherever your leadership desires may take you, POINT can help you get there.

The 2006 POINT Youth Leadership Conference is a free one-day leadership development event for 22 secondary schools in the North Toronto area and the three Toronto universities.

It's intended to provide you with the skills, knowledge and motivation you need to become or continue to be leaders in your respective schools and communities.

POINT (People and Organizations in North Toronto) is the sponsor of this conference. This non-profit organization serves people who live, work and study in North Toronto by improving availability and increasing awareness of community social and health services through information, education and advocacy.

Like the perennial paradox "What comes first? The chicken or the egg?" — whether leaders are born or created continues to be a provocative question.

Some people are born with certain advantages, but everyone has the potential to become a leader.

"Sayings like 'Leaders are born, not made' conjure up notions of prime ministers and generals, and put leadership out of reach for the average individual — make it seem like leadership is about luck of the draw," says Michelle Dagnino, executive director of the Youth Action Network and one of the speakers at this conference.

Everyone has the potential to become a leader.

"But each and every one of us can be a leader, no matter what our socio-economic background, or circumstances in life," she said.

So, what exactly is leadership?

John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States, stated: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

Dagnino suggested: "Great leadership, just like the rest of life, is about attempting something, failing at it, and then doing better next time."

Matt Evans, OSAID (Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving) executive director added: "A good leader is the person who says 'I'll do it. But I will need your help,' someone who is willing to listen and check his or her ego at the door occasionally."

Leadership is a synergy of all these things. It is the desire to motivate others to achieve their best, coupled with the determination to work your hardest, the persistence to never give up, the humility to ask for and accept help, the generosity to assist others, the confidence to be comfortable with yourself and the righteousness to give credit where credit is due.

The POINT Conference is striving to provide a spark that will ignite the proverbial flame and hopefully illuminate a path towards leadership.

Dagnino and Evans will be speaking at the conference, with Paul Godfrey, Toronto Blue Jays president & CEO; The Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and Stella Umeh, 1992 Olympic gymnast.

Seminars will focus on leadership skill development — presentation skills, public speaking, motivational techniques, teamwork and individualism — and showcase real people who have put these skills into action.

E-mail point@point.org to register or for information on the 2006 POINT Youth Leadership Conference taking place on Oct. 13. Space is limited.