

Keynote speaker shares her parenting journey



APRIL 18, 2015 12:00 AM • DAMIAN RICO, DAMIAN.RICO@NWI.COM, (219) 933-3248

MERRILLVILLE | One of the "toughest" decisions in her life was made as a parent, in the best interest of her children.

ABC's "Windy City Live" co-host Val Warner gave the keynote speech at the Parenting Awareness Month Indiana's Celebrate Family community breakfast Friday at IBEW Local 697, 7200 Mississippi St. Warner talked about the happiness and challenges of being a parent and making decisions based on providing security.

"Growing up, I had a great support system behind me," Warner said. "I really did have a village. My achievements have come from a proper upbringing. Not a perfect one, but a proper one."

Warner told workshop participants about the sacrifices her parents made to mend their relationship and offer their children a home of security and love.

Unfortunately, for Warner, her marriage did not withstand the test of time like her parents'.

"I contemplated leaving my marriage for three years," Warner said. "I take parenting seriously, and I needed to show my children a healthy and respectful relationship without chaos and hurt."

Warner said the decision to leave was difficult and found her leaving the south suburbs at 3 a.m. to get to work and counting on her mother to help parent her children.

"Kids are way more resilient than we can ever imagine," Warner said. "I don't have some universal magic to share with you, but I found out what works for me. We all have to remember we have to ask for help and it's not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of vulnerability."

"My daughter, Zoey, and son Max are my life," Warner said. "I face preteen issues from my daughter just like everyone else, and I get calls from the school when my son is launching things, including himself, across the room."

Warner told guests that parenting is the most rewarding part of her life and that her children teach her patience, respect and the power of prayer.

"Anyone who has kids knows they will keep you on your knees praying," Warner said.

Workshop participants thanked Warner with a standing ovation and were offered the opportunity to take photos with the host following her speech, just prior to the panel discussion moderated by Regina Holloman.

"We are just so thankful that Val could share her insight with us," said Laura Smith-Wynn, Indiana Parenting Institute executive director. "She has a demanding schedule but made the time to come speak about something she is passionate about."

The Parenting Awareness Month Indiana breakfast was sponsored by the city of Gary, Lighthouse Academies, First Midwest Bank, NIPSCO, Aaron's Furniture and the Indiana Parenting Institute.