

Knicks legend shares dreams with west Bronx teens

By Sarah Valenzuela
Bronx Times



Community News Group/Sarah Valenzuela

Dr. Dick Barnett addressed students at MSP 327 as part of the Signature Scholars program motivational event on Friday, May 4.

At 81-years old, Dr. Dick Barnett, a former NBA All-Star and member of the Knicks' 1970 and 1973 championship teams, made a huge investment into his education, midway through his professional basketball career.

Under the lights of Madison Square Garden, in his sixth professional season, Barnett ruptured his Achilles tendon so severely that the team's doctor explained he might not play professionally ever again.

As he lay on the examination table, shocked by the dire prediction, and realizing he never completed his education at Tennessee A&I, he knew it was time to change his entire mindset.

"I turned my dream into an adventure," said Dr. Dick Barnett.

From that day forward he vowed to continue his education no matter what, striving to follow the dreams and passions he held close to his heart.

"It was always my priority to find happiness, meaning and context to my life beyond basketball," he continued.

It was this story and message that he delivered to the Signature Scholars program students at C.M.S.P. 327 in Mount Eden, not far from Fordham University, the institution he received

his doctorate in education at the age of 54.

“When I was a teenager, I wasn’t very serious like a lot of young people today,” said Dr. Barnett to the students. “I wasn’t a very good student, I wasn’t always Dr. Barnett.”

The students at the event were either part of the Signature Scholars program or simply interested in hearing what a former professional athlete who received his doctorate, had to say.

“Everybody has a turn and it’s your turn to figure out what to do with your future,” he said.

Through the event, Dr. Barnett discussed the dream paradigm, that education and following your dreams were not mutually exclusive.

During the discussion he listed several key components for following a dream, like knowing and being true to oneself and committing to end goals.

“To live a dream, (the components) should be on the tip of your tongue and part of your heart and soul,” explained Dr. Barnett. “It should drive and command you to be successful.”

Dr. Barnett related with the student’s situations, understanding that the road to success is blocked by many obstacles and tried to motivate the students not to let those obstacles prevent them from staying focused.

During the question and answer portion of the event, Dr. Barnett explained how his circumstances, while dangerous, did not deter him from following his dream of playing basketball.

To give the students context of the time period, he relayed he was a college student-athlete in a southern state around the same time Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi.

“Dr. Barnett was very inspirational,” said student Elizabeth Mota, after the event. “He probably faced more obstacles than any of us, but it helped me evaluate how I want to accomplish my own dreams.”

At the end of the event, Dr. Barnett gave away a few basketballs he signed and autographed shirts the NBA sent to the school for the students.

“Dreams are the driver to your happiness,” Barnett said.

Reach Reporter Sarah Valenzuela at (718) 260-4584. E-mail her at svalenzuela@cnglocal.com.

Updated 5:15 pm, July 9, 2018

©2018 Community News Group

[Contact Us](#) [Archive](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Email Newsletter](#) [RSS Feed](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#)

