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## Mentoring program guides, inspires youngsters

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*Khurram Saeed*  
STAFF

SPRING VALLEY - Over the past couple of months, 14-year-old Adonis Brown has started to see himself differently, more boldly.

His mentors have taught him "how to be a grown man," Brown said, by teaching him about everything from how to talk with respect to his elders to trusting him with the responsibility of choosing wisely.

"It makes me think big about myself, self-confidence," said Brown, who lives in Spring Valley.

Brown is among 20 black and Latino boys taking part in the Rockland Omega AcaDemy (ROAD) mentoring program. It held its monthly meeting yesterday at Finkelstein Memorial Library in Spring Valley, where the eight boys who showed up learned about decision making, as well as etiquette and proper dress.

The men of the Xi Lambda Lambda chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity began the program for at-risk youngsters last March, hoping to instill in them not only the value of an education but that success was within their reach.

"We want to provide these young boys with some direction," said Dennis McGloster, president of the 4-year-old chapter. "African-American boys and Latino boys are in big trouble. Instead of sitting back and waiting for everybody else to help, we do."

The chapter had originally intended to focus on boys in middle school, but demand was so great they decided to work with boys from fourth to 11th grade. Its waiting list has more than 40 names on it, said McGloster, a tax accountant who lives in Hillcrest.

In between the monthly ROAD meetings, the chapter's 19 members have taken the boys to book signings and museums, cleaned up local roads and taught them computer skills. Next month, they're planning on going deep-sea fishing on a chartered boat.

Leslie Brown sat at a table outside the library's meeting room while her two sons were listening to Ronald Jones, a retired junior high school principal from Brooklyn who was the keynote speaker.

Brown, a single mother, said in the two months Adonis has been mentored - he was referred by the principal at Pomona Middle School - he's doing better at school, taking more responsibility and behaving better. She was so pleased that Adonis now had "positive strong men" in his life; she encouraged her 10-year-old son, Tyshawn, to join the program.

"They could really use it, those extra hands to pull them up to a better level," Brown said. "Instead of getting with the street violence and the gangs, this gives them something to do, someone to talk to. I'm sure the older men relate to the younger ones."

Jones, the retired principal, said young men of color need to be "excellent" in what they're doing because they face many challenges. They are under peer pressure to make bad choices and often lack the support systems to help counteract those choices.

"In some cases, as much as I hate to say it, I think parents are not as involved as they should be, due to many factors," Jones said before the meeting. "Many of them are busy and working, but I feel that communities also are not as close-knit as they used to be, where neighbors looked after neighbors. Unfortunately, sometimes when neighbors do look after neighbors, some parents are not so receptive to hearing (about) negative behavior about their children."

Tyshawn Brown said he was looking forward to taking part in the mentoring program, which is funded, in part, by Orange and Rockland Utilities and grants obtained through state Sen. Thomas Morahan, R-New City.

"I know that here if you need help, they will teach you," Tyshawn said. Reach Khurram Saeed at [ksaeed@lohud.com](mailto:ksaeed@lohud.com) or 845-578-2412. Contact ROAD

For more information about the Rockland Omega AcaDemy (ROAD) mentoring program, call Dennis McGloster at 845- 323-2548 or visit [www.rocklandques.com](http://www.rocklandques.com).