

Betterton seeks to motivate

By Kim Chlevrue, Journal writer

Charles Betterton has a vision: a Kankakee filled with successful, motivated people. He knows there are motivational resources out there that change lives.

His own life was changed at age 16 when his mother gave him a copy of "The Power of Positive Thinking" by Norman Vincent Peale.

Other people respond to audio and videotapes, seminars or even one-on-one success coaching. Betterton's vision is to make all these things available in one place.

"For a number of years, I have been developing a plan for helping more people take advantage of state-of-the-art development training resources," he said. "I think it can best be done through a network of locally initiated learning Centers, he said.

Betterton's local venture, the University for Successful Living, offers a "smorgasbord of resources", including motivational and inspirational cassette tapes, access to national quality motivational speakers, classes on time management, and success coach training.

The USL also gives other communities the chance to establish their own Centers for Successful Living. A showcase Friday will present Kankakee County with an overview of what is available.

Betterton calls the Center for Successful Living Showcase, an all-day event at the downtown Kankakee Executive Centre, a chance for area businesses and non-profit organizations to spend the day experiencing hour-long mini-sessions that demonstrate different motivational resources.

Registration is \$25 a person for the half-day session or \$50 for the full day. It will also give them an opportunity to regain their inspiration and learn how to motivate others. Betterton, 49, will be one of four professional trainers making the presentations.

He has created a number of the seminars and workshops himself. "I've been designing development training seminars for 25 years. My first program, the Introduction to Personal and Professional Success Techniques, is still in use. In fact, it's one of the 10 programs offered at the showcase," he said.

He is also affiliated with and owns distributorships for a number of related success-oriented programs.

Betterton of Stelle arrived from his home state of Mississippi about 20 years ago with a long history of accomplishments. By the time he was 19, he was involved in community development in the Mississippi Delta, establishing a youth program where "kids of both races could get together and hang out."

That experience led to work in the National Disaster Relief Program, where at 24, Betterton set a record by finding housing for 107 homeless Xenia, Ohio tornado victims in one day. He has served as Kankakee's Director of Community and Economic Development, a position he assumed at the request of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

By that time, he had picked up a master's degree in Community Economic Development and had become a certified trainer - one of 200 world-wide for Brian Tracy International. He was a co-founder of the local CAN DO! and is now working on establishing CAN DO! Organizations and Centers for Successful Living in other areas.

Betterton says the centers can also make available a wealth of state-of-the-art training and development resources. "These resources are usually targeted only to the top 5 percent of the people in corporate America," Betterton said. "What makes the centers special is our commitment to reach as many of the other 95 percent as possible." When the local CSLs bring in a speaker, the profit generated stays in the community.

A Les Brown/Norman Vincent Peale speaking engagement in 1990 drew a standing room only crowd to Kankakee. "People from over 200 cities came to that event," said Betterton.

Betterton is simultaneously working on a Success Center Partnership with the housing authority in Muncie, Ind., which he later hopes to introduce to some 3,500 public housing authorities throughout the country.

He just returned from a trip to the Bahamas, where he conducted strategic planning and visioning exercises for the Bahamas Association for Social Health, the Unity Church of the Bahamas, and Vision 2020 - a group of 30 leaders who want the island nation to lead the world in innovation and creativity. He will return to the Bahamas this month to continue strategic planning.