

# Sister to Sister event focuses on wellness

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**Matthew Brown/The Journal News**

Former MTV Networks executive Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy speaks during yesterday's Sister to Sister International's 13th annual Health Symposium at the Westchester Marriott in Greenburgh.

GREENBURGH - Women, young and old, "claimed their wellness" at Sister to Sister International's 13th annual Health Symposium at the Westchester Marriott yesterday.

Members of the nonprofit organization and the community learned more about their health through workshops, panels and health screenings at yesterday's forum.

The health forum was one of several events during the organization's Healthy Weekend Extravaganza, which kicked off Friday night with the Third Annual Gala Reception Awards Dinner.

Althema Goodson of Ossining, attended a workshop about personal goals and achievement, led by inspirational author Terrie Williams.

"I learned to take one step at a time," Goodson said. "We forget to do little things and to take care of ourselves."

Pamela Minyard, director of an afterschool program called Tomorrow Leaders, brought a group of pre-adolescents and teens with her to the conference.

"They should be exposed to the importance of health awareness," Minyard said. "We just came from incredible workshops about STDs and different alternatives like yoga."

Attendees at the symposium also had health screens to test levels of glucose, body mass index, cholesterol, blood pressure, body fat, bone density and for HIV.

Vendors sold hand-crafted jewelry, fresh vegetables and fruit, African paraphernalia, cosmetic products, books and more.

Makeda James of Mount Vernon worked at a booth for the American Lung Association of New York State.

"It's important for African Americans to know what each other are doing and to support that - support knowledge of awareness," James said. "Seeing all these African-American women entrepreneurs is inspiring."

Susan Taylor, editorial director of Essence Magazine, the luncheon's keynote speaker, shared her own past health challenges such as a hip ailment and depression, with the audience.

Taylor urged the audience to never settle for the first diagnosis.

She also said to not fret over health concerns.

"Don't turn away visitors at your door," Taylor said. These visitors, good or bad, teach people how to take better care of themselves, she said.

With any difficulty in life, be it health, careers or anything else, Taylor said to seek God and "bring your tender heart and fierce spirit."

Other guests at the forum included Westchester County Executive Andrew Spano, state Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, director of Westchester County Human Rights Commission.

Some honorees and experts in attendance were journalist Carol Jenkins, business expert, and former MTV Networks executive Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy and Carla Harris, a managing director of Morgan Stanley.

The weekend events will conclude with a spiritual service today at Kingdom Christian Cultural Center in Yonkers.

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