

Pendergraph helps give boost to area students

Many hear about the value of not giving up in class

By **BRIANT T. SMITH**
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Jeff Pendergraph was late.

After a small mixup left Pendergraph trying to navigate his own way to Clark College on Sunday, the Trail Blazers rookie forward walked through the doors of the O'Connell Center about 30 minutes behind schedule.

But once Pendergraph showed up, he more than delivered.

The bruising power forward spoke eloquently before an estimated crowd of 700, many of whom were aspiring college stu-

dents seeking to learn more about the College Bound Scholarship.

The four-year scholarship, which was initiated in 2007, provides eligible students with tuition to Washington public universities, as well as community and vocational colleges.

Pendergraph recounted how, as an academically underachieving high school student, he almost threw away a promising basketball career due to low grades and a lack of ambition.

"A lot of teams stopped recruiting me because of my (test



Jeff Pendergraph

scores," Pendergraph said.

But pride and devotion to his mother pulled Pendergraph through. And he was soon graduating early from Arizona State with an economics degree.

For Pendergraph, the ability to persevere when others counted him out served as a serious life lesson. And it was in the hope of passing it along that he spoke to area middle and high school students.

"Do what you feel like you love to do," Pendergraph said.

He added: "Anything worth having in this world is not easy to get."

Cassie Betts, 14, was among those in attendance who received Pendergraph's message.

Betts, who holds a 3.87 grade-point average at McLoughlin Middle School, said she hopes

to one day attend either Washington State or Harvard.

The CBS, which requires an initial eighth-grade signup, could help Betts if she chooses WSU.

Beth Ahlstrom, a CBS program associate, said the fund has shown a strong return rate.

"It's everything we hoped it would be," Ahlstrom said.

Meanwhile, Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt said he understood the full impact that an institution such as Clark can have when paired with inspired students. Leavitt attended the college for three years before finishing at WSU. And he felt he was more prepared than others upon arriving in Spokane.

"This is one of the first steps to a successful future," Leavitt said.