

Tragedy fuels talks about choices

"The biggest thing I talk about is the power of one decision," says Bobby Petrocelli.

By Jennifer L. Williams | 247-4644

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Personal responsibility is a broad theme, but former Virginia resident Bobby Petrocelli stresses that each choice we make determines our ultimate outcome.

The motivational speaker and author will share his message at 7 p.m. today at the Tabb High School auditorium during this year's York County Youth Week evening community meeting. The event is free and open to the public.

Youth Week is an annual York County program emphasizing the importance of character development and responsible decision-making for its high-school-aged residents. In its ninth year, the event is co-sponsored by the Victory Family YMCA, York County School Division, Parks and Recreation, and York County Youth Commission.

Petrocelli will also speak throughout the week at each of York's high schools, but today's event is a chance for parents and other residents to hear him.

Petrocelli's career in public speaking sprang from his own personal tragedy. When he was 24 and teaching and coaching in Texas, his wife of a little more than two years was killed and Petrocelli severely injured when a drunken driver crashed his pickup truck into their house.

As part of his grieving process, Petrocelli eventually started to use his story to bring a positive message. He encourages his listeners to take 10 seconds to change the way they think, choose and live.

His points aren't just about the dangers of drunken driving.

"The biggest thing I talk about is the power of one decision, the power of one moment," Petrocelli said.

"Life is filled with moments upon moments," he said. "How we act, react, respond, the decisions we make and how we react determines a lot of our success and failure."

Petrocelli, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., worked as a teacher, coach and guidance counselor at Great Bridge High School in Chesapeake from 1988-93 during his 10 years living in Virginia. He received encouragement from co-workers there for his public speaking, and he started doing it full time in August 1993.

Petrocelli has written several books, including "10 Seconds Will Change Your Life Forever."

Petrocelli moved from Virginia to New York and then to his current residence outside Tampa, Fla. He has been remarried for 19 years.

"I still call Virginia home," he said. "I visit several times a year. I love the area and the people of Virginia. They've always been so wonderful to me."

A York County Youth Week evening community meeting with motivational speaker Bobby Petrocelli is set for

7 p.m. today in the Tabb High School auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.