

LOCAL NEWS

Grimes inspires next generation to be 'unapologetically you'

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When Tiffini Grimes walks into a room, she carries a simple, but powerful message for the next generation of leaders, especially young women of color. "Walk to your own beat and be unapologetically you," she says with a contagious smile.

Grimes not only preaches it, she lives it.

In her role as Deputy Athletics Director and Senior Woman Administrator at Purdue University she helps shape the ever-changing landscape of college athletics. It's a big job for a kid who says she grew up painfully shy before finding her voice.

Early in February, Grimes returned to Fort Wayne as part of a Black History Month Assembly at Concordia Lutheran High School. It was a full circle moment for the 2001 CLHS grad who was part of a panel organized by the school and the Black Lutheran Scholarship Team (B.L.A.S.T.).



Tiffini Grimes talks to students at Concordia High School during an assembly for Black History Month February 2nd, 2023.

The event featured African American students who attended Concordia in the mid 1970's and chose to send their children there as well. It was an opportunity for her to share the stage for the first time with her parents. "Concordia is legacy for our family. Anyone that knows our family knows that on both sides, we all went here and it is a proud tradition that we have."



Tiffini Grimes talks with Concordia High School students on February 2nd, 2023.

Grimes uses her platform to reinforce her message. "It's a great responsibility to make sure young people, specifically young girls of color know that there truly are no limits and we should be proud of the skin that we are in."

Grimes grew up in a household where her parents told her she could be anything she wanted to be. She believed it, but says it didn't sink in right away.

"Representation matters," she says. "It wasn't until I saw people actually functioning and operating in the careers I wanted to pursue that it hit home differently."

For her, that person was the late Eugene Parker. Parker blazed trails as one of the first Black power agents in the NFL. He also went to Concordia with her parents in the 1970's.

Grimes profiled his career for a class project when she was just 16. Years later, after working tirelessly, he finally hired her as an intern after her junior year in college.

It was there she saw Parker's attention to detail and integrity that laid the foundation for the path she would take. Not as a sports agent, but instead in the athletic administration field.



Tiffini Grimes talks with WANE 15's Pat Hoffmann at Concordia Lutheran High School.

After graduating law school at Valparaiso, she spent six years as a member of the University of Alabama's executive leadership team supporting the Crimson Tide's elite football program and other sports as an administrator.

When she spoke to students in the same auditorium she grew up in, she planted seeds of inspiration. "To the students of color here, especially my young, African American, beautiful Black women. I would like to say, use it as your power. Use it as your power."

“There are spaces where you will be the only woman. Spaces where you will be the only person of color. That is a powerful thing.”

“My parents told me, you have to be ten times better. Ten times more prepared.”

“So whenever you are in a space where you feel the room isn’t ready for you, that’s okay. Flip your platform and show them why the room should get ready for you.”

“People not being ready for you is not a you problem, it’s a them problem.”

The message hit home with Concordia Junior Curry Jackson who says she was inspired to follow in her footsteps. “She’s a firecracker. She doesn’t take no for an answer and is so confident in herself. It’s really important knowing someone of my color, and a woman above that, can have success and is willing to give me advice.”

Grimes brings a lot to the table despite her small frame of just five-feet-one. “When I walk in a room, I’m probably not expected to come in the package that I arrive in, but that’s not my fault. That’s not my issue. I’m there to do a job and build relationships. Eventually people around me will get past any biases they may have. It’s all about using your platform. As a woman of color, it’s my responsibility to make sure that I walk into a room very prepared so that people can see us in a different light.”

Jackson took the message to heart and says she learned a valuable lesson. “You have to create your own opportunities. They are not just going to be there. You have to go ahead and take them.”

It’s easy to see why Tiffini Grimes is Positively Fort Wayne!

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