

Merson peels layers to get to the heart

Dennis Fujimoto
THE GARDEN ISLAND

KAPA'A — Why do you do your homework? Why do you do chores? Those were some of the questions posed by Len Merson during his hour-long Magnificent Me program for students Tuesday.

Stopping at the Holomua after school program at the Kapa'a Middle School, one of three stops in the day, Merson told about 100 students gathered for the program, "You don't do it because you're afraid you're going to get busted. You don't do it for your teacher or your parents. You do it for me!"

The "me" he referred to is the individual. Homework still has to be done. Chores still need to be taken care of. The difference is that once an individual discovers the importance of self-esteem, those tasks are done for one's self, not for someone else.

Merson, the CEO and founder of ChaosOver Inc., was a resident of O'ahu and Kaua'i from 1971 to 1992 and his training program was born in Wailua Homesteads, states an e-mail from Paula O'Very-Saylor.

Using student volunteers, Merson quickly got students engaged in the path to discover-

ing and improving their own self-esteem in the hour-long presentation.

"Use your imagination," Merson said. "Clone yourself. Is that clone you're facing someone who could be your best friend? Share a room with?

Merson quickly got students engaged in the path to discovering and improving their own self-esteem in the hour-long presentation.

Or share your deepest secrets with?"

Merson strongly believes in giving back to the community and his way of doing this is through the "Magnificent Me" program geared for children in the fourth through 12th grades, O'Very-Saylor said.

Merson also stopped by the Kapa'a High School 10th grade class and the Kawaikini New Century Public Charter School in Puhā.

"What if someone you loved and respected said 'You are a loser!'" Merson asked another student volunteer. "How would you feel?"

These feelings of negativity within the self gets boys to want to fight and stokes the

fires of aggression, he said.

But Merson said, drawing on the Christian religion, what were the final words Jesus said?

Using those types of interactive questions and prodding, the students worked their way through the program. In this

particular phase, Merson demonstrated the power of forgiveness.

Merson has presented live seminars with four months of individualized coaching to more than 77,000 people throughout the world for the past 36 years, according to O'Very-Saylor's e-mail.

More recently, the list of people he has trained locally include firms such as Koga Engineering, Unlimited Construction, Shioi Builders, Swinerton Builders and Service Rentals and Supplies. In 1988, he trained the mayor of Kaua'i and her entire staff, O'Very-Saylor said.

In yet another segment, this time utilizing three volunteers, Merson lined up the three students in the shadow of each other.

"You are cool," he said to the first.

The second student was labelled "scared" and the third "real."

"Why do you want to be 'cool'?" he asked, getting various answers from the engaged



Dennis Fujimoto/The Garden Island

There's cool, there's scared and there's real. Len Merson uses three volunteers from the Holomua after school program at Kapa'a Middle School to demonstrate a point on self-esteem during the 'Magnificent Me' program, Tuesday afternoon.

students.

Taking those answers, Merson peeled away the layers — "You think you're 'cool' because you don't want people to see 'scared,'" he said, moving the first student aside.

"Take away the 'cool' and

people see 'scared.' But that is only for a short while because if you take away 'scared,' you meet the 'real' you," he said. "One that is from the heart. And I can't wait to meet the real you."

For more information, people

can visit Merson's Web site at www.chaosover.com

► **Dennis Fujimoto**, photographer and staff writer, can be reached at 245-3681 (ext. 253) or dfujimoto@kauaipubco.com