



# PERFORMER REVIVES GREAT WOMEN FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

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William Dean, Staff Writer

## **BLUFFTON: Tech Prep Consortium Hosts One-Woman Show to Celebrate Carolina Careers Week**

Lowcountry middle and high school students are traveling through time this week to hear a few words of wisdom from aviator Bessie Coleman, exploration guide Sacagawea and other famous women from the past.

Kate Campbell Stevenson, a performer from Washington, D.C., is visiting five schools in Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton and Hampton counties, where she is presenting her one-woman show, *Women: Back to the Future*. With monologues, songs and a series of costume changes, Stevenson portrays the women as role models for students.

"Woman in the past have always been problem-solvers," Stevenson said Monday before an audience of mostly girls at H.E. McCracken Middle School in Bluffton. "How successful you are at that skill of problem-solving will determine how successful you are in life."

She encouraged the seventh- and eighth-graders to take action in planning the careers of their choice, as Bessie Coleman did as the first black woman to become an aviator in the early 1920s. Coleman "shows us to look deep down inside ourselves and to overcome the barriers we have within ourselves," Stevenson said.

Coleman was the favorite character for Hilton Head Middle School students Nicole Josey, 14, and Miranda Collins, 13.

"She stood up for her rights being a woman," Nicole said.

Stevenson, who has been a performer for 25 years, was inspired six years ago to write her show to keep her own children from becoming complacent and passively accepting the status quo. Her goal was to convey the message to young people to believe in themselves, while creating a job for herself, she said.

"It's important to remind everybody, whatever they want to do, don't let anybody tell you what you can't do," Stevenson said.

Stevenson told the girls to look for role models who are teachers, doctors and other women around them who are making the world a better place. Though girls more often resist pursuing their dreams, it's a universal problem with both boys and girls, she said. Stevenson hopes the show relays to students that the instant gratification from watching TV, computing and playing Nintendo games is not how the real world works.

"You have to invest yourself," she said.

Hilton Head Middle School students Ashton Kelley and Hattie Keyes -- both 14 -- were encouraged by the message.

Hattie especially appreciated hearing "that we can have a say and we're not any less powerful than any other people," she said.

***Women: Back to the Future*** was sponsored by the Lowcountry Tech Prep Consortium to celebrate South Carolina's Carolina Careers Week. In addition to introducing students to career options, it also served as a reminder to focus more on women in history for girls in school, Hilton Head Middle School science teacher Veronica Miller said.

"It's a very important thing that we single out these young ladies," she said. "They can go as far as they want to go."

Since her first performance in California, Stevenson has taken her show on the road to schools in Indiana, Wyoming and other states. On Friday, she will perform at 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. at Lady's Island Middle School.

**Reporter William Dean can be reached at 837-5255, ext. 108, or at [wdean@lowcountrynow.com](mailto:wdean@lowcountrynow.com)**