

Impressions wow Tyner audience

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By:

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Tyner Academy students traded books and iPods for doo-wops and snapping fingers Friday when two members of The Impressions performed.

As part of The HistoryMakers, a Chicago-based organization that brings celebrities back to their hometowns, special guests Fred Cash and Sam Gooden returned to their stomping grounds to encourage students to study hard.

The two, along with several other band members, including singer Curtis Mayfield, hit it big in the 1950s and 1960s with such songs as "It's All Right," "People Get Ready," "Gypsy Woman" and "We're a Winner." As the '60s rolled on, their songs increasingly focused on civil rights and social consciousness.

On Friday, what turned into a real-life version of a "Glee" episode wasn't all about the music.

"Listen to your parents," Gooden said. "You think you know more than them, but you don't."

The well-mannered auditorium of teens belted out words to The Impressions' hits "Amen" and "It's All Right" and screamed whenever one of the singers spoke about his blessings.

Kentucky Fried Chicken and advice to stay out of gangs also got ovations, while a mention that the two singers went to Tyner-rival Howard High School yielded little response.

Most of the teens admitted that they didn't know who The Impressions were at the beginning of the assembly, but as soon as the first few notes of "Amen" were played, they realized they were listening to music-industry legends.

Letrell Russell, 15, knew all the words to "It's All Right" and said he would be looking up other songs by The Impressions when he got home.

"This was a historical moment," Russell said. "We really got to see how they feel about their hometown. They really appreciate us."

Gooden and Cash also encouraged students to take advantage of their opportunities and strive for greatness.

"Who would have thought that two young guys from Chattanooga would have a part of I-24 named after them?" Cash said, referencing the recently dedicated Impressions Highway near downtown Chattanooga.

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Staff Photo by Allison Carter/Chattanooga Times Free Press - Sep17, 2010 - Fred Cash, left, and Samuel Gooden, right, former members of the group The Impressions, talk to students at Tyner Academy. Students had the opportunity to ask the two men questions about their careers, childhoods and other things.

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