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Humorist: Enjoy life's rich journey

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Humorist and author Tom Mullen had the crowd roaring with laughter during the opening session of the Leadership Jackson County Distinguished Speaker Series Tuesday at The Elks Lodge in Seymour.

Mullen lived up to his reputation as a humorist, speaking candidly about everything from his penchant for dominating conversation with talk of his diabetes to family vacations with his wife and children.

Sandwiched between the jokes, however, Mullen, a former professor of creative writing and preaching at the Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, squeezed in a message about appreciating life in good times and bad.

"If you can't enjoy the journey, you can't enjoy the destination," he said.

Mullen also regaled the crowd with tales of the surgery he had to remove his colon, and the inspirational nurse he met at the hospital who had undergone the same operation as a child and dedicated her life to helping those in the same situation. She taught him a lesson, he said, about giving back to others even as we are faced with adversity, adding that life gives us all challenges along the way.

"How we respond to those things that aren't fair can make an enormous difference," he said.

Before Mullen's speech, the audience was introduced to two youth who have benefited from Leadership Jackson County's youth leadership program, YOJACK.

The program is countywide and teaches leadership to groups of seventh-grade students each year. The Distinguished Speaker Series supports YOJACK.

YOJACK graduates and Crothersville students Liz Otte and Mason Boicourt were on hand to praise the program and its impact on their lives and the lives of others.

"You really get to see that it is cool to be a leader in your school," Otte said.

Boicourt had similar praise, adding that his life has been enriched by participation in the program.

"There's no words to explain it," he said. "It's amazing how much they teach you that you can use in everyday life."

Other scheduled speakers for the series are Jean Deeds and Reid Duffy.

Deeds, at the age of 51, left her career in public relations to hike the 2,155-mile Appalachian Trail. She now serves as a marketing consultant and has made more than 400 speeches about

her trip. She also is the author of a book about her experiences, "There are Mountains to Climb."

Duffy is a native of Chicago and a graduate of Notre Dame. He is best-known for his restaurant reviews under the title of "Duffy's Diner" and now writes restaurant reviews and dining articles for several publications in Indiana.