

## Haven Career Day Helps Students See Future - Evanston RoundTable

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**Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi of Actors Gymnasium at Haven Middle School's Career Day.**

*Photo by Mary Mumbrue*

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**By Mary Helt Gavin**

The **future** may have been opened a little wider on April 2 for **students** of **Haven** Middle School, when nearly 50 adults came to the school to share what they do in their professional lives.

Many with conventional **careers** – firefighters, architects, lawyers, medical doctors, scientists, technology specialists, business persons, athletes and musicians – and those whose jobs are more unusual – a comic-book writer, a circus performer and a fighter pilot – told the **students** in small groups about the work, study and passion that led them to their **careers**.

Pediatrician Lynn Chehab told **students** that she did not take the required college courses to get into medical school, but took them afterward. She said she loved medical school and still maintains friendships from that time. Dr. Chehab, who works at Evanston Hospital and at the school-based health center at Evanston Township High School, told the **students** about taking the Hippocratic Oath on the first **day** of medical school. “As a doctor, the first thing is not to harm anybody,” she said.

Firefighter/paramedic Andrew Jakus helped deliver a baby in an ambulance the week before, he told the **students**. While training is required to become a firefighter, a four-year college degree is a plus rather than a necessity. Asked about triage in rescue operations, he said teams are deployed to every part of a burning building, “so there’s never a question about whom to rescue first.” He said the pay is good and having good friends to talk about what he has **seen helps** manage the stress of **seeing** people hurt or sick.

Buildings are dynamic, architects Dian Keehan and Chris Oakley told the **students**; they move with wind and temperature. “They swell, they expand, so [building materials] have to be able to adapt,” Mr. Oakley said.

“Math is important,” said Ms. Keehan. So is listening. “As an architect, you have to be a good listener and a problem-solver.” She advised the **students** to start their portfolios early and to keep drawing. “Put a sketchbook in your backpack or your bicycle basket. Anything you do in art class – take a picture of it,” she said.

Sylvia Hernandez grew up with a circus. She said that when she was 5 years old, she was so bad at the circus tricks she was afraid her family would give up on her. She trained very hard, with her brother as a spotter.

After she left the circus and came to Chicago, Ms. Hernandez said, someone asked her to teach some acting/circus tricks. “I became a teacher and choreographer,” said Ms. Hernandez, who cofounded Actors Gymnasium on Noyes Street and has won many awards for her choreography.

“I think life is like that,” she told the **students**. “You don’t have to decide what you want to do. It finds you.”

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