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JOSH SHIPP TELLS FFA MEMBERS TO "AVOID THE AVERAGE"

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By Kelsey Kennedy

INDIANAPOLIS (October 20, 2010) – The 83rd National FFA Convention started with a bang with opening session’s keynote speaker , Josh Shipp. After an introduction and telling the audience how he once asked Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to arm wrestle, Shipp wasted little time telling the 46,263 attendees his main message, “Don’t be average.” Shipp elaborated, telling stories about his life and offering lessons and advice on just how to avoid being average, all while mixing in beat boxing and Guitar Hero references.

Shipp reminded the audience, “Bad things are going to happen to you.” Despite this, we have a choice. “You can choose to get bitter, or you can choose to get better. It’s a small choice that can make a huge difference in your life,” Shipp said. Abandoned, abused and raised in the foster system as a child, Shipp has seen his share of bad things and told the audience the story of how he came to realize that if you have something negative in your life, you should embrace it. On failure, Shipp reminded everyone that it’s okay to fail, as long as you stay positive and “push past the discomfort” to be successful.

About success, Shipp told the audience, “Don’t make dreams, make goals.” Shipp believes that too often, we’re too soft when it comes to dreams. Goals, however, are more solid and attainable. He cautioned that looking too far ahead could be overwhelming. “Do not study your hero’s end results, study their first steps,” Shipp said. He also stressed the importance of having at least one adult in your life that believes in you. For Shipp, these people were his foster parents, but he said that one adult could be anyone from a parent to advisor and all that mattered was that they could love you unconditionally, even if you fail. Shipp told the audience that even with goals and supportive people in our lives, it is ultimately our choice to be successful. His words? “If your life is lame, it’s because you’re lame.”

Growing up, Shipp learned to be the class clown as a way to deal with all the unpleasant things in his life. In high school, a teacher urged him to use his comedic talents to make a difference in the lives of others. Shipp got involved in leadership activities, and started speaking professionally at the age of 17. He quickly became known for his direct and comedic style and talking to teens. “I am not a motivational speaker, I am a motivational ninja,” Shipp said. Shipp is now a motivational ninja not just on stage, but online, in print and on television. His popular advice website features written and video responses to teens asking for advice, and he released a book this past August titled The Teen’s Guide to World Domination. He also hosts Jump Shipp, a show that helps 20-somethings quit the things that are holding them back from what they want to do in life.

You can learn more about Josh Shipp on his website, [HeyJosh.com](#), and you can catch Jump Shipp on Halogen.

Kelsey Kennedy is a former FFA member from Willamina, Ore. She is currently a science writing major at MIT.

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