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Memphis Women's Summit aims to reach out and inspire women to succeed

By **Jonah Williams**
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Local female leaders came together during Women's History month at the fourth annual Memphis Women's Summit at the University of Memphis University Center to discuss the future of women in Memphis.

The Junior League of Memphis sponsored the event to inspire women to become active in their communities and succeed professionally.

"It's all about reaching out in the community and helping others," said Dominique Dawes, the keynote speaker and Olympic gold medalist. "Once you get outside your comfort zone, you realize how comfortable you really are."

The Junior League of Memphis strives to encourage women to be active and leading figures in their communities and views women as "catalysts for lasting change in the Mid-South."

The event boasted several seminars for the approximately 350 attendees about career, finance, self care and leadership.

The seminars were taught by local female leaders including Kontji Anthony, a co-anchor at



PHOTO BY DAKOTA SMITH

The Junior League of Memphis sponsored the fourth annual Memphis Women's Summit, an annual community-focused leadership conference Thursday. The event included breakout sessions with local leaders, vendor booths focused on women's issues, a luncheon with top female leaders in Memphis and a keynote address by Olympic gold medalist Dominique Dawes.

WMC Action News 5, Alexandra Matlock, the CEO of Contigo-Creative, and Heather Hunt, the

director at NEXUS Leaders.

Discussions at the seminars included financial security, stress and

health management, becoming a leader both professionally and in the community and knowing

when to listen and learn.

The most anticipated event was the keynote speech from Dawes.

Dawes went to her first Olympics at the age of 15 and won her first gold medal at 19. She came from what she called "not the kindest environment" and put all her energy into being an Olympic gymnast.

Although she struggled with her familial situation, she did not let her upbringing hinder her.

"Perspective is key," Dawes said, "You need to start your day in the right perspective — grateful for your gifts."

Dawes shared the obstacles she had overcome, particularly the judges who didn't like the way she looked. Because she was born bow-legged and black, Dawes said she faced criticism based on her appearance.

"My caucasian coach fought for me tooth and nail to make sure that the judges treated me the same as everyone else," Dawes said.

Her coach pushed for Dawes to go beyond her limits, because there were people who were trying to keep her off the team, and only Dawes could

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Former Memphis Tigers shine at Pro Day

By **Raven Moore**
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In front of 55 NFL scouts, eight former University of Memphis football players participated in Memphis' Pro Day on March 28 to showcase their skills and better their chances of being added to an NFL roster.

Much of the attention was centered on running backs Tony Pollard and Darrell Henderson, but there were other standouts who grabbed the scouts' focus. One of them being linebacker Curtis Akins who was the Tigers' leading tackler last season with 100 on the year.

He didn't receive an invitation to the Scouting Combine, which meant this was his first real opportunity to showcase what he could do in front of NFL teams. When asked by the

media, he told them he felt his workout went fairly well.

"I think my performance was great," Akins said. "I came out here and hit what I was supposed to hit. I think what topped it off to make it a good day was doing 26 reps on the bench press and running a 4.46, 40 time."

Now the 40-yard dash times weren't confirmed at the conclusion of workouts, but Akins' time would have placed him fourth among the 22 linebackers who participated in the drill at the Combine.

When asked what teams he'd been getting attention from, Akins highlighted one playoff team he'd gotten very familiar with.

"The Indianapolis Colts have shown me a lot of interest," Akins said after working with their coaches during much of



Tony Pollard

PHOTO BY MATTHEW SMITH

Wednesday's drills. "Their linebackers' coach said I'd be a great fit in their room and that they

brought four of their people down to come and watch me."

Offensive lineman Trevon

Tate also got his first chance to show scouts what he could do on the field. He was invited to the NFL Scouting Combine but was unable to participate because of medical limitations.

When asked by the media how he thought his workout stacked up against the other offensive linemen of the class, he seemed confident in what he showed.

"I feel like I gave the scouts something to come out and see," Tate said. "I did a lot better than I expected. With my 40, I wanted to run a 4.8, but I ended up running about a 4.9 which I'm satisfied with at 306 pounds. I feel like every drill that I did would have been at least in the top-10 among all the linemen who participated

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