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## Press Release

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*\* PHOTO ATTACHED\*\**

### **Raising Cane's Founder Inspires Students at Sherwood MS Parent Day**

**Baton Rouge, LA** – On Saturday, February 7, the bleachers in **Sherwood Middle School's Gym** were filled with parents and students – waiting to hear from **Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers founder and CEO Todd Graves**. As part of **the school's Parent Educational Day**, Graves encouraged students to achieve their dreams by sharing his own story.

Graves, who came up with his chicken fingers restaurant concept in college, went to work as a young man to save money to start the business. Where? Alaska, as a fisherman on a boat hunting sockeye salmon. Before he got the job, however, Graves spent several nights in a tent on the tundra. Then he was hired on a 32-foot boat for the salmon rush, working about 20 hours a day non stop.

"I was just thrilled to be out there, because I wanted to earn money and open my chicken fingers restaurant," Graves said. After socking away money and getting a Small Business Administration loan, he opened his first restaurant in August 1996. The first month, he cleared \$30. Many people tried to discourage him from going into the restaurant, which originally was called Sockeye's Chicken Fingers until he named it after his dog. But **Graves, pictured with Sherwood Middle School Principal Phyllis Crawford**, never gave up.

"It takes a lot to be successful," Graves told students. "People told me I've got to make good grades. Taking Business and other courses of study, plus working in a restaurant, gave me a great start in life. Developing a business plan for the restaurant in college gave me the structure to set it up. But you really have to start getting prepared at the age you are now. I stayed focus and worked really hard, and I had a dream that no one could tell me I couldn't do. I backed it up with hard work. You can do the same. You are the future of this community."

In addition to Graves's appearance, local businesses and organizations set up booths or had speakers at the school, including the LSU girls' volleyball team, chemists and Army officers.

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