

New Bedford High School marks Women's History Month with forum

Students hear from panel of women community leaders

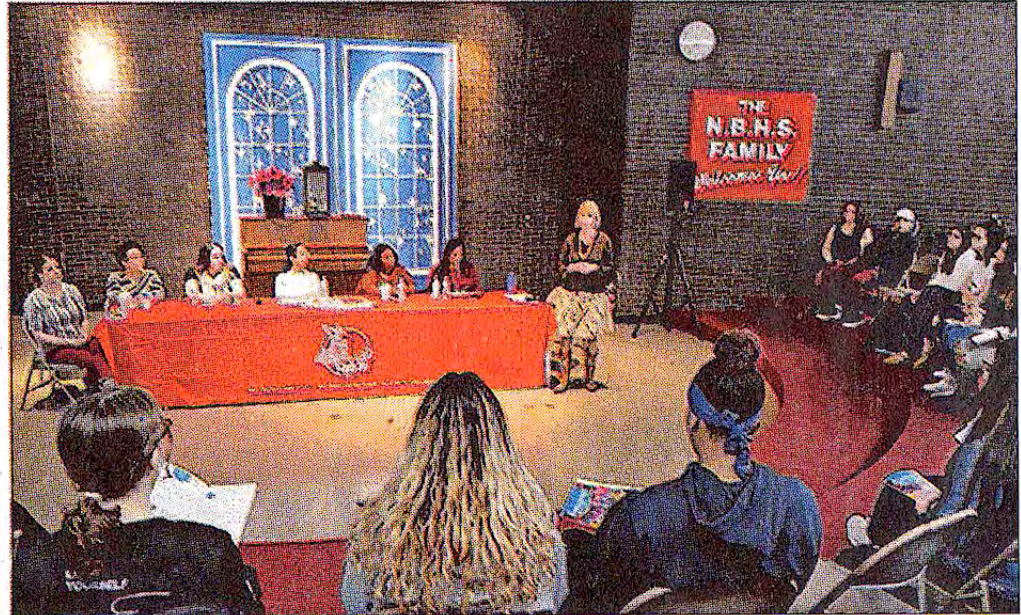
The Standard-Times

NEW BEDFORD — A special student-organized forum helped to mark Women's History Month at New Bedford High School.

Titled "New Bedford High School Celebrates Women," the forum drew young women from throughout the school to hear a panel of professional women, each community leaders in their fields, relate their life experiences, career tracks and the individual adversities and opportunities they encountered along the way.

Their presentations, which included accounts of personal challenge and economic hardship, had students listening intently. Common themes of persistence, dedication, and faith in one's abilities were some of the common elements of empowerment that emerged from the forum, which also included questions from the student audience, according to a School Department news release.

Junior Jacelina Goncalves initiated the effort to demonstrate to young women at NBHS that it is possible, regardless of their background, sex, race or class, for a woman's dream to become a reality with hard work and determination. Panelists



Cheryl Barlett, president and CEO of Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, addresses young women at New Bedford High School, one of several speakers at a forum titled "New Bedford High School Celebrates Women." The student-organized event marked the start of Women's History Month. [COURTESY PHOTO]

shared stories of great success but also of great struggles and how they were able to accomplish their goals, the release said.

Headmaster Bernadette Coelho, in a statement, noted the students' initiative in preparing the day's program. "These young women are tomorrow's leaders and I am so proud that they understand the importance of producing a forum for and about them, the very action of which is empowering, and a value we thrive to foster at New Bedford High."

Panelists included Cheryl Barlett, President and CEO of Greater New Bedford Community Health Center; Renee Ledbetter, President, United Interfaith Action Board and VP, New Bedford NAACP, Dakota Lopes, NBHS Class of 2011, member of the Youth Ambassador Program in partnership with 3rd Eye and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park; Cheyenne Martinez, NBHS Class of 2011, a practicing Occupational Therapist; Jodi Spencer RN, Certified School Nurse at NBHS; and Deven

Q. Robitaille, Programs & Events Manager, SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce.

The student committee which organized the Women's History Month program included Jacelina Goncalves, Sabrina Amaral, Destiny Maldonado, Alyssa Adams, Thalia Barros, Corelys Santiago, and Marissa Sebastiao. NBHS Staff assisting the committee: Mr. Mare, Class of 2020 Advisor/Math Teacher, Mrs. Oliveira, ELA Teacher, Ms. Martinez, NBHS Graduation Facilitator, and Carrie Cetenich.