

# Career event designed to inspire youth



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Michelle Bonam hopes to inspire young people and provide them with career guidance that was missing in her own life when she hosts the second South Alabama Youth Career Conference at the Coleman Center this Saturday.

“This is open to the youth of Covington County and all surrounding areas,” she said. “We have invited Andalusia alumni and other individuals I know to talk about how they chose their careers, and how they got there.

“Growing up, I didn’t have anyone to guide me,” she said. “I went in it blind. I wanted to give something back to the youth so they can have some guidance.”

This year’s speakers have wide-ranging backgrounds.

Bonam worked for the City of Andalusia Utilities Department out of college, then earned a master’s degree in criminal justice and counseling. At present, she is a rehab counselor for the state of Alabama.

“I am in the school system, assisting teens and students with physical, mental or learning disabilities. What I want for our youth is to show them they can reach their maximum potential.”

Other speakers include Kim Staley of Gantt who was in the military before pursuing an education career and working as a principal in Mobile County. He is now retired.

Glen Samuel of Heath is a Straughn High School graduate who served in the military before pursuing a nursing career.

Pamela Butler overcame addiction and currently works for the State of Alabama in mental health.

Demetrius Nelson will tell the story of taking the wrong path and spending nine years in prison. He is now a minister and motivational speaker.

James Barnes is a graduate of Andalusia High School and Troy University who currently lives in Atlanta and owns a group home.

Joe Nix of Andalusia had a successful career with the Alabama Department of Transportation.

And Tammy Cross, also an AHS graduate, is a current elementary school teacher.

Jamal Curry will provide music at the event.

“Last year, we had about 56 to come,” Bonam said. “To me, even if only one or two kids come and we help them, I have still fulfilled what I was supposed to do. But we hope it will be even bigger this year.”

Bonam said she and other volunteers are calling parents and encouraging youth from ages 10 to 24 to attend.

The event is slated for 10 a.m. until noon this Saturday, Oct. 6, at the Coleman Center on C.C. Baker Avenue.



[\(link\)](#)

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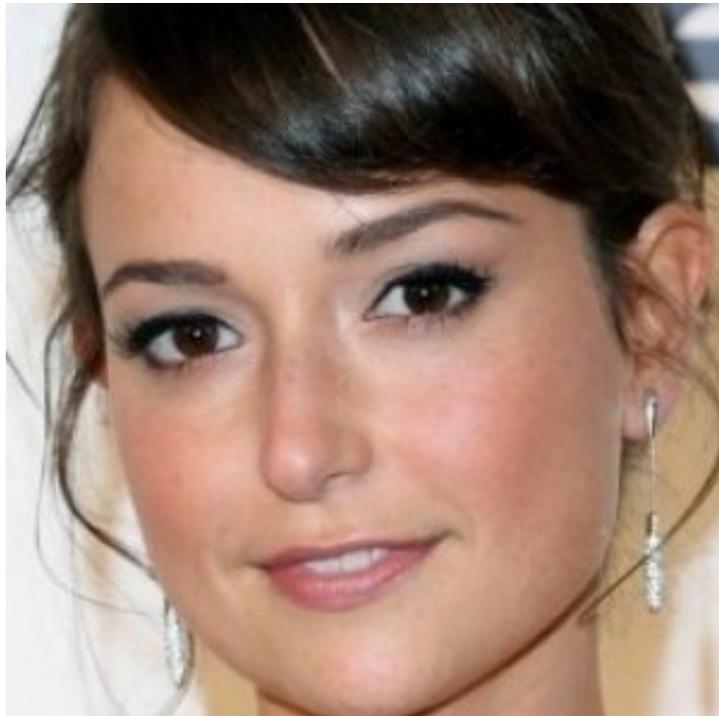
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