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Aaron: Doctors' winning prescription

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IN FIVE short years since their first book, "The Pact," came out, three young doctors from Newark have achieved almost cult status.



Doctors Sampson Davis, Rameck Hunt and George Jenkins would draw a crowd even if they hadn't just published a new book, "The Bond."

Maybe it's not as hot as Harry Potter, but the book's release last week drew a crowd of 200 -- half of them children and teenagers -- to a book signing at Barnes & Noble in Clifton. The doctors didn't just sign. They talked, they related, they advised and they posed for family photos with groups of eager visitors, whether or not they had bought a book.

The Three Doctors as a franchise is growing in impact as a force for good.

The young doctors have a Web site and a foundation. They are also available for mentoring and motivational talks with audiences everywhere.

It's not for nothing. Coming from difficult family environments, these 34-year-old guys who beat the streets of Newark at its worst use themselves as a living teaching tool. Children are listening.

A reading teacher at Englewood's Janis E. Dismus Middle School thought their appearance important enough to drive girls from her class to meet them. They can relate to the doctors' central theme: If negative peer pressure makes kids do things they don't want to do, then positive peer pressure will make them do the right thing.



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"They're facing the same peer pressure as those guys did, and we're reading about it in the book," said Englewood teacher Samantha Sheridan. Sure enough, right there in the reading workbook for her class are excerpts from "The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream." Young readers are drawn in by the doctors' honest self-assessment.

A thin line

"They talk about how they're doctors and some of their patients are criminals. And they say there's a thin line between them because they could have gone that way," Sheridan said. The reading workbook also

demonstrates how the three men made an agreement to be one another's support system so they all could make it through medical school. "They're a big inspiration to these kids."

The children from all over North Jersey waiting patiently in line for a moment with the doctors included about a dozen Eastside High School students from Paterson. Their teacher bought them copies of the second book, "We Beat the Streets," so they can read it and imagine their future in a better living environment.

"You can't say anywhere is great, but I follow my own mind. I'm my own leader," said Edgar Pichardo, a student at Eastside. In the doctors' books he finds hope to overcome a reading disability. A 6-foot-4-inch personable senior, Pichardo, 18, said his goal is reading well enough to pass the test to become a policeman or fireman.

As young men, Davis, Hunt and Jenkins faced some difficult choices, but leaned on one another through high school, through undergrad pre-med at Seton Hall, and through med school at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. At one point, when their program lost funding, school debts were mounting fast, but they stuck to their goal.

The new book, the doctors' third, is about reconciliation with the absent father they hold responsible for the family's hardship. In "The Bond: Three Young Men Learn to Forgive and Reconnect with Their Fathers," each of the doctors honestly expresses the pain of growing up in a household with no father and feeling damaged by his absence.

Reconnecting is not easy. Healing is a journey, forgiveness an almost unreachable destination when the wounds are deep from the estrangement. For the father's part, abandoned children are hard to face, even when there's a plausible explanation.

The doctors' bottom line is that fathers need to go back for their kids, and grown-up kids need to leave the door open even if it means confronting a painful past.

The Three Doctors are on the right track. In the role of experienced big brothers, they connect with young people and show some appreciation for the damage caused by ignoring children starved for male attention.

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