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Set goals and score

Achievers offer pointers to put you on road to success

By Pam Harbaugh
FLORIDA TODAY

If at first you don't succeed, you may not have written it down. Or, maybe you didn't even know what it is you wanted to accomplish in the first place.

According to the experts, those are the two key issues when it comes to life accomplishments: setting goals and then setting about to achieve them.



Kristen Warren, 16, a junior at Satellite High School, also writes down her goals, because "they really make you think." On top her list: Performing on Broadway and writing a book and a musical.
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down, you see it, and it's there in front of you, and it becomes the foundation of what you have to achieve."

Alas, Palmisano is a real exception. Most people don't even know what they want in life, said Chris Downie, founder of SparkPeople, a corporation that helps others set and reach goals.

"A lot of people are not very good at goal setting," Downie said. "Sometimes, people set goals that are important to others, not them."

For those who have no idea of what they really want to do, Downie suggests they

Take a lesson on the importance of goal setting from 18-year-old David Palmisano, a West Shore High School senior who will deliver a speech on the subject at Sunday's graduation.

Palmisano knows from experience. He owns a boat, has an A+ Computer Certification, has run his own business, has a private pilot's license and is already finished with the first year of college (remember, he's still a day away from graduating high school).

Goal setting looms large for high school students, who are trying to figure out what they want to do in life. But it's just as important, and elusive, to the rest of us.

Palmisano said he has achieved these and more by setting specific goals, then writing them down to make sure he acts on them.

"If you just say your goals verbally, it's not really a goal," he said. "When you write it

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think about their passions and motivation.

"List the top 25 things that make you happy," he said. "Find out if you're spending time in those areas."

If you're only spending 20 percent of your time in these areas, then make an adjustment."

If watching TV isn't one of the 25 things that make happy, chances are you can reduce the time spent in front of the tube to make time for one of your goals.

If you've already set your goals but are having a hard time getting motivated to follow through, Downie has two suggestions to help kick start your effort.

- Cut out pictures from magazines and make a "Vision Collage" to remind you of your goals.
- Take a "Fast Break" by going for an easily reachable goal and accomplishing it in the next two weeks.

"By reaching that (two week) goal, you can get excited about reaching other goals," he said.

Annette Richmond, founder of Career-intelligence.com, wrote that people should use the "SMART" system when it comes to goal setting.

"SMART refers to goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Framed," she wrote.

That's sage advice, said Wanda Bethea of Melbourne, a licensed psychologist.

"All the literature will tell you those are the ingredients when it comes to goal setting," Bethea said. "If you set too high of a goal, you won't achieve it, (and) you kind of sabotage yourself."

And, Bethea said, don't forget to write them down.

"There's something powerful about putting them on paper and visualizing it."

The most common goals with which Downie helps people are weight loss, career change and getting fit. The second most common goals are getting organized, eating the right foods and gaining leadership skills.

Other commons goals noted at SparkPeople.com include form a positive attitude, stop procrastinating, build self confidence, reduce boredom, make contribution to society and reduce stress.

Downie said goals frequently shift throughout life. He breaks goals into three categories:

- Short-term action steps.
- Medium-term goals.
- Long-term goals.

Short term includes daily and weekly to-do lists. An example could be to only go to a

fast-food restaurant twice in one week, or to spend 15 minutes a day organizing your closets.

Medium-term milestones are small steps taken toward a long-term goal. Long-term goals are constant and take more than a year to accomplish. For instance, if you have a goal to have three children, the medium-term milestone could be to have one child. If you have a long-term goal to get a master's degree, a medium-term milestone would be to check out university graduate programs.

Visit www.about-goal-setting.com, and you'll find seven steps about goal setting: intense desire, write them down, gather assistance, set deadlines, plan, visualize and persistence.

The idea of "persistence" is the core of Palmisano's graduation speech.

"I'm using examples of Walt Disney and how he got started and how he once filed for bankruptcy," he said. "And Abraham Lincoln, who ran for office more than eight times and failed and was beaten out and as a last hurrah ran for president and won it.

"The final person is Michael Jordan, who took over 26 game winning shots, lost more than 300 games and was cut from the high school basketball team. He's now, by many, considered the best basketball player ever lived."

Goals should center on family and home, finance and career, spirituality and ethics, health and body, society and culture and mental health and education, according to www.topachievement.com/goalsetting.html. That Web site also suggests writing your goals in positive words rather than negative, writing the goal out fully and reviewing your goals daily.

Important common denominators on Web sites and on the tongues of all these experts? Know your goals, then be sure to write them down.

Here are Top Ten Life Goals lists on which five local Brevardians have focused or are focusing:

David Palmisano, 18

Palmisano will be speaking on goal setting Sunday at his graduation ceremony from West Shore Junior/Senior High School.

Here's what he has accomplished already, and some goals for which he is still aiming.

- 1) Save enough money to get his first boat by ninth grade.
- 2) Get an "A+ Computer Certification" at age 15.
- 3) Start his own computer business at age 15. (He closed it seven months ago.)
- 4) Fly solo on his 16th birthday.
- 5) Earn a private pilot's license at age 17.
- 6) While still in high school, do enough dual enrollment at Brevard Community College so he would have completed his college freshman year by the time he graduated high school.

7) Earn his commercial pilot's license by the end of this year and to be a commercial airline pilot and Air Force fighter pilot.

8) Graduate college in fewer than three years.

9) Run for public office one day.

10) Become youth pastor or motivational speaker later in life.

Palmisano has achieved goals 1 through 6. He expects wholeheartedly that he will achieve the others sometime in his life.

Mark Alvarez, 49

Alvarez, owner of Melbourne Magic, a store that sells magic, gag and novelty items, said he likes to splurge on himself. Lists are a way for him to discover what he really wants.

1) Find peace and serenity.

2) Provide for my family.

3) Be independently wealthy by the age of 30. "I don't know how close I came to that one."

4) Go back stage at the opening of "A Chorus Line." (He did that in 1975.)

5) Stay at the Dakota (a New York City apartment house and landmark).

6) Travel all over the world. "As I got older, it changed from traveling to settling down."

7) Play Tchaikovsky's 1st Piano Concerto. He studied it for three years then played it for his father on his own baby grand piano.

8) Own a home theater.

9) Have his own business.

10) Have a great kitchen.

Alvarez says he has accomplished all his goals. He plans on creating a new list and working on that later.

Kristen Warren, 16

Warren, a junior at Satellite High School, said she makes "a lot of lists" because "they really help you think."

1) Perform in a Broadway play.

2) Write a book and a musical.

- 3) Muster up the courage one day and tell others what she really thinks of them.
- 4) Learn how to play an instrument, probably the guitar.
- 5) Go to college.
- 6) Be a mom.
- 7) Get married, too, and then be a mom. "I guess that kind of goes together."
- 8) Go to South Africa. "I just want to see it."
- 9) Live in New York "as long as I can take it."
- 10) Sky dive.

Still in high school, Warren has yet to accomplish these goals. But she expects she will achieve many of them because she has written down her aspirations. Warren believes in lists because in the past they have helped her gain greater insight into herself and others.

Wendy Brandon, 59

Brandon is a commercial real estate developer, former president of the Henegar Center for the Arts and the Melbourne/Palm Bay Area Chamber of Commerce. Growing up in Los Angeles when it was still a "small town," she knew she'd have to make specific goals to get the most out of life.

- 1) Live in New York City for two years and see every show on Broadway.
- 2) Live in Paris for a year.
- 3) Go to law school.
- 4) Have a family.
- 5) Stay involved in the community and make a difference in the world. "Having helped build the Henegar Center, when I see children performing on that stage, it gives me such a joy."
- 6) Exercise, so she can keep up with any future grandchildren.
- 7) Own her own business, which she has with her husband, Harry. It's called Brandon Properties.
- 8) Learn how to create beautiful floral arrangements.
- 9) Get as much art as she can.
- 10) Buy a winery in Napa/Sonoma.

Brandon has accomplished items 1 through 7. Although she has bought much art, she wants to continue that pursuit. She still hasn't learned to create "beautiful floral arrangements," but expects she will one day. Buying that winery is a dream she hopes will come true one day.

Wanda Bethea, 56

Bethea began writing goals down at an early age. Here's her list of the top 10 things she has wanted to accomplish during her life:

- 1) To become a lawyer or doctor. (She's a doctor of psychology.)
- 2) Lose weight, which she did.
- 3) Teach, which she continues to do at Florida Tech as an adjunct professor.
- 4) Make a difference in people's lives.
- 5) Have a family.
- 6) Work out on a daily basis.
- 7) Maintain spirituality and ethics in her business.
- 8) Go to Europe.
- 9) Be able to be alone yet not lonely.
- 10) Write a book.

Bethea has already done items 1 through 9. As far as writing a book, "That's what I'm working on right now," she said.

Still stumped?

For those completely lost about what goals to set, go to www.mygoals.com for great ideas. The site lists categories, such as "health and fitness," "personal finance" and "recreation and leisure." Click onto any of those categories and ideas galore will pop up.

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