



KEVIN E. SCHMIDT / THE JOURNAL-STANDARD

**Lieutenant Colonel Turregano Talks to a group of high school students from northern Illinois during the 21st Century Leaders conference Friday. The conference was hosted by Rep. Don Manzullo at the Rock Valley College Stenstrom Center in Rockford.**

## Area high school students learn from leaders

Seminar sponsored by Manzullo draws about 170 attendants.

**BY SHARON BOEHLEFELD**  
The Journal-Standard

ROCKFORD — In a dimmed meeting room, high school students listened intently to learn about the future of U.S. space exploration.

As he quizzed them about space history, presenter Scott Powell of the Challenger Learning Center in Woodstock tossed out answers, quips and prizes, such as alien and space shuttle pencils.

The session was part of the fifth annual 21st Century Leaders conference, held Friday at Rock Valley College's Stenstrom Center in Rockford.

The seminar's sponsor, Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Egan said he developed the seminar in part to help teach students about the kinds of challenges faced by President Bush.

"The presidency has been

through tough times," he said. "Kids need to know it's more than scandal."

Students listened as Powell talked about new materials developed for space flight. He rattled off a list including Tang, Velcro and other now-common products. A new one, he said, called Aerogel, is "the least dense solid known to man. It's called 'blue smoke.' ... I've held it in my hand and it's like a completely warm, almost weightless ice cube, but it has a blue tint to it." Someday, he said, the material may be used in many of the ways we use glass today.

Alex Haffey, a Savanna senior, likes space and found the session interesting. Orangeville senior Mark Jordan, who is considering a career in engineering, agreed. "It was interesting and he didn't talk down to us at all."

In another room, Lt. Col. Clemson Turregano, a professor at the U.S. Naval War College, told students he was part of a meeting in Washington, D.C. on

Thursday where representatives of the U.S., Canada and England discussed the future of Iraq.

Turregano led them through a 10-minute history of Iraq from the Assyrians to the Ottomans to the British to the Baathists. Then he challenged them to make suggestions for diplomatic, informational, military and economic steps to take to help the country build its future.

Annie Mitchell, a Dakota junior, said the session was "really informational. It helps a lot with school and to know what's going on in the world."

For Galena junior Robbie Bergmann, the session's interactive nature made it better than others where students only heard lectures and didn't get a chance to do much.

After the first round of workshops, Scales Mound junior Dustin Homb said a debate about the Patriot Act "looked at all the facts and let you form your own opinions."

Pearl City junior Jodi Kempel agreed. "It helped me to see how other people felt about issues." A debater, she said, "gave me ideas of what I could say about it" in contests.

Milledgeville junior Carlyle Schweska said she "learned a lot" from a session on hot careers. "It gave us a lot of Web sites to go to, what to look for when I go into my career," she said.

About 170 students from all over northwest Illinois were registered for the session, which included lunch and a closing talk by aeronautical engineer Ken Blackburn, a motivational speaker who holds the Guinness record for "time aloft for paper airplanes."

Students opened their day with a chance to quiz Manzullo about anything.

"It's obvious these kids are reading the newspaper," he said after the grilling. "Their level of knowledge is challenging and, at the same time, it's encouraging."