Lee gives insight into the world of forensics

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Forensic scientist Dr. Henry Lee gives a lecture entitled ‘Lessons Learned From High-Profile Cases’ at Eastern Connecticut State University on Tuesday.

WILLIMANTIC — World-renowned forensic scientist Dr. Henry Lee is a productive man who does not like to waste his time, especially since there is not enough time in a day to do so.

“Everyone gets the same 24 hours in a day, nothing more, nothing less,” Lee told a large crowd at Eastern Connecticut State University Tuesday night as part of its Arts and Lecture Series.

The theme of Lee’s talk was an encouraging message to students to work hard to achieve goals.

“I only did one thing in my life: to make the impossible become possible,” Lee said, stating hard work and dedication is what will make that happen.

When Lee and his wife came to the United States from Taiwan, they had a combined amount of $15 in savings and could not speak any English.

After his move, Lee has worked with law enforcement agencies from 46 countries and helped solve more than 8,000 cases.

“Me and my wife, together, we had $15 in our pockets. Now 15 years later, I still don’t really speak English, but I sure have a lot of money. You can make a lot of money as long as you work hard,” said Lee. “That’s nothing to be ashamed of — working hard. No matter what profession you’re in, work hard.”

As motivating as it was insightful, Lee’s talk was also humorous.

Lee began by acknowledging his mother, who died at the age of 106. He said she was the person he most respected as well as the person he most feared.

Lee told his audience there were highprofile cases that he did not want to get involved with, but one phone call to his mother would quickly change his mind.

He said his mother coerced him into getting involved with many things that has helped him move his career along in the right direction.

He also added humor to his talk when he spoke about receiving his doctorate degrees, some of them honorary.

“I still remember when I got my first doctorate degree. I did not even have my own commencement because I
had no money. So I graduated in my own living room," Lee said as he showed a photo of himself in his cap and gown in his family’s living room. "Now life is so easy. I give a commencement speech, 20 minutes or 30 minutes, I get another doctorate degree."

Lee also spoke about his involvement in cases such as the infamous O.J. Simpson case in 1994 and other high profile cases.

“A lot of people think that I only work on rich people’s cases, but that’s not true,” Lee said. “I also work on public interest cases.”

Cases where civilians are killed by police officers are the most difficult cases to work on, Lee said.

He began to bring up the recent case in Ferguson, Mo., where protests and riots marred a grand jury decision not to indict a police officer there after he shot and killed a black teen.

“Ferguson is not going to be the first case, and definitely not going to be the last one,” Lee said. “In those cases you have to be totally objective. From day one, (you) should involve the community. Let the public know it’s a fair investigation.”

Lee then began to explain the differences between the TV show “CSI” to the actual reality of forensics, using the same humor he had during the length of his talk.

“Every time ‘CSI’ solves a case, they get a hug and a kiss,” said Lee. “I’ve never received a hug and a kiss.”

Doubled over in laughter, audience members thought highly of Lee’s talk.

“It was wonderful. I never knew that man was going to be as funny as he was,” said ECSU Spanish professor Nancy Armstrong. “I’ve only seen him on TV when he’s doing documentaries and explaining different cases. I never knew he was so funny.”

Eastern sophomore Danielle Turley said she took a few things away from Lee’s visit.

“I thought it was very interesting. I liked hearing his insight on his cases,” said Turley.

Senior Kaleigh Cummings also said the talk was insightful.

“I thought he approached it in an interesting way, and it was very insightful and thought provoking,” said Cummings.