

Staten Islanders in Need Get a Leg Up



Antonio Litman and his team ready to distribute donations

Thanks to a meeting last fall with the Borough President's Director of Education, Diane Marciuliano, a partnership between District 31 and Virginia's House of Hope was formed.

In October, Antonio Litman, the organization's founder, delivered a van full of clothing, shoes and toys to the District Office for distribution to Staten Island public school families. Upon arrival he met with Mr. & Mrs. Zulma Cruz and Mr. & Mrs. Marie Castelucci and together they quickly began the daunting task of unloading an entire van full of goodies.

The partnership blossomed into another project where Virginia's House of Hope donated \$2400 worth of gift cards so that families could buy holiday turkeys. With the help of Parent Coordinators and other school staff, the clothing, shoes, toys and food gift cards were delivered to many of our Staten Island public school families in need. Capitalizing on this successful partnership, Mr. Litman then asked for the contact information of the other District Family Advocates so that his lifeline could be expanded into the other boroughs.

Parent Coordinators Plan for the Unexpected

Last month, with the help of P.C.s from District 13, Keisha Husbands - outreach coordinator for the Office of Emergency Management - kicked off the pilot program "Ready NY for Kids".

The program outlined the need to prepare a stay at home kit with enough supplies to last three days in the event that a blizzard or blackout keeps families indoors.

Additionally, P.C.s were told of the usefulness of emergency reference cards in providing a starting point for a family dialogue on preparedness.

Sixth graders, after an engaging assembly in November, were given emergency reference cards to bring home and fill out. Teachers reported back to OEM that not only did students bring the forms home and had them filled out with contact and medical information for emergency workers, but that the students were animatedly talking about what they had learned at the assembly in class.

Now it's up to the parent coordinators who attended the event to bring what they learned back to their principals and help with the next stage of the pilot program - a citywide rollout.

In the meantime, you can start getting prepared by visiting the Ready New York website (nyc.gov/readyny).

CityWide

BULLETIN

Free Flu Vaccinations from the N.Y.C. Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Young children, especially those with asthma, are at risk of getting very sick from the flu (influenza). While most children recover from the flu without problems, it can lead to hospitalization in some cases or even death. The best way to protect children (6 months - 18 years) from the flu is by annual flu vaccination. For more information about influenza, including free vaccination, please call the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 212-676-2259, or visit <http://www.nyc.gov/health/flu>.

N.Y. State Regents Exams

Regents exams for Grades 9-12 and eligible students take place between January 27-30. Please check with your school for more information.

Deputy Chancellor Lyles on 'Closing the Achievement Gap'



Deputy Chancellor Marcia Lyles with Chancellor Klein and Rev. Al Sharpton

On Thursday, January 8th, Chancellor Klein and Rev. Al Sharpton hosted a discussion titled, "Ensuring Equality for All of Our Students". The event was part of "Closing the Achievement Gap" - an series of discussions on the state of public education and strategies to improve it.

Thursday's discussion addressed the ethnic divide within the achievement gap which was blamed, in part, on a persistent deficiency in community involvement.

In a follow up interview, Dr. Lyles expanded on that point, "It's not good enough for highly involved parents to look out for the needs of only their children, we have to support parent

leaders that are advocating on behalf of all children".

Creating a synergy between community advocacy, parent engagement, and dynamic leadership is the task at hand. And according to Dr. Lyles a good place to start is with the transition to middle school.

The Deputy Chancellor recommended that parents take the time to talk with their children's new middle school teachers and start a conversation on how their child learns - advancing a working relationship with teachers, the school, and the Department as a whole that benefits everyone involved.