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NYC Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott and DYCD Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav Attend Showcase of Youth Driven Service Projects

Part of Mayor Bloomberg's Anti-poverty Initiative, Participants of the Teen ACTION Program Highlight their Work to Improve NYC Neighborhoods

Brooklyn, NY – Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav and New York City Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott today addressed young people at the Teen ACTION Youth Forum at the NYC College of Technology (CUNY) in Brooklyn. Teen ACTION (**Achieving Change Together In Our Neighborhoods**) is an anti-poverty initiative that engages young people from all five boroughs in service learning projects. Studies show that the combination of structured learning and challenging service experiences can offer benefits that are especially significant for adolescent participants, including reduced risk for teen pregnancy, increased school engagement, and improved chances for academic success. Administered by DYCD, the program is a part of Mayor Bloomberg's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), which has committed more than \$150 million annually to explore innovative approaches to reducing poverty.

“If we truly want to change students’ lives and help them set examples in their neighborhoods, we need to keep children engaged after school lets out each day,” said **Schools Chancellor Walcott**. “Teen ACTION does just that. The students here today are doing their part to improve their communities, tackling problems that afflict New York City and urban environments everywhere. We can all learn a lot from students like these.”

Today’s forum was an opportunity for the participants to showcase some of their projects, which varied from promoting literacy through book drives to researching how to improve the environment through urban farming. After the project showcase, participants took part in a health fair organized around the theme “Stay Strong, Live Long.” The health fair was organized by Teen ACTION participants, and included peer-to-peer mentoring on health issues, in addition to participation from health oriented organizations.

“Teen ACTION is a program that was designed by young people, for young people,” said **DYCD Commissioner Mullgrav**. “By identifying problems in their community and finding ways to solve them, our young people are taking action and becoming real assets for their neighborhoods. Whether it’s pulling together a project to combat violence against the LGBTQ community or promoting health and fitness, I’m always amazed at what our young people can accomplish by working together. Given the energy and depth

of these projects, I have no doubt that the next generation of leadership in our City is in good hands.”

DYCD administers 52 Teen ACTION programs throughout the City, serving more than 4,000 young people. The program gives participants, who range in age from 13 to 21 or are in 6th through 12th grade, an opportunity to develop life skills while making a meaningful contribution to their community through public service projects.

Participants of today’s forum highlighted their work to eliminate bullying, encourage sustainable environmental practices, promote healthy peer-to-peer relationships and to support the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) community through anti-violence campaigns, among other public service-oriented projects.

“Teen ACTION is an important program because it helps us see how we can make our community a better place,” said **Leenda Linares, a 10th grader at the Bronxworks – Community School for Social Justice Program**. “It proves that when teens get involved in the problems our neighborhoods face, we can make the choices that make change. Someday, we will look back and see that change occurred because we took the time to notice what was happening around us and did something about it.”

Each Teen ACTION program is linked to a local health care provider that provides participants with information on resources available to them and strategies for avoiding risky behavior. Joining the Teen ACTION participants for the health fair portion of today’s forum were the following organizations:

- Health Education Alternatives for Teens (HEAT)
- New York Civil Liberties Union Teen Health Initiative
- Just Food
- Red Cross
- NY Road Runners
- Sahaia Meditation
- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Healthy Bodega Project
- Brooklyn Smoke-Free Partnership

In September, the America’s Promise Alliance, the nation’s largest partnership organization dedicated to youth and children, announced that New York City had been named a winner of the Alliance’s *100 Best Communities for Young People* competition. Its 2010 recognition marks the third win for New York City in the competition.

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