

KICKIN' IT with Lifestyles & Society Editor Audrey J. Bernard

Reach Out and Read of Greater New York fetes literacy champions



MC Hoda Kotb
rockin' out at mic

Reach Out and Read of Greater New York presented its outstanding Literacy champion awards to bestselling author **James Patterson**, recipient of the coveted 2010 Children's Choice Book Awards' Author of the Year, and **Greg Schumann**, vice president and group publisher, The Parenting Group, *Parenting* magazine's Mom Congress on Education and Learning.

People StyleWatch editor and event chair **Susan Kaufman** made the presentations to the literacy giants for their contributions to children's literacy at Reach Out and Read of Greater New York's annual benefit and auction Monday, May 16, 2011 at Bridgewater, atop the Fulton Market Building in the South Street Seaport.

The rainy weather did not dampen the spirits of some 200 guests in attendance including Miss Teen USA **Kamie Crawford**. Adding to the luminosity of the crowd was the always bubbly **Hoda Kotb**, co-host, fourth hour of *Today*, correspondent, *Date-line NBC*, who returned as Mistress of Ceremonies.

Kotb started the evening off on an upbeat note rocking out to "Come and Get Your Love" on her iPod that she shared on mic to the delight of the attendees to the tune of \$200,000 which was raised during the live auction presided over by ace auctioneer **Robin Lundberg**. The highest ticket item was the chance to name a character in a future James Patterson novel which went for \$15,000.

Traci Lester, executive director, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York, jumpstarted the exciting evening by thanking her guests for braving the wind and rain to attend the fundraising party and add to the success of the benefit in support of early childhood literacy.

Lester also acknowledged and thanked the event supporters, generous donors, her staff and volunteers in attendance including the many pediatricians from the many health centers and hospitals in the region that came out to support the organization which helps them provide free books and early literacy guidance to children 6 months through 5 years old in low-income and underserved communities.

Reach Out and Read of Greater New York distribute books to over a quarter of a million children annually at 180 Reach Out and Read clinical locations throughout New York City, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties. Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based, national non-profit organization that prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering



Reach Out and Read of Greater New York executive director **Traci Lester**, event chair and *People StyleWatch* editor **Susan Kaufman**, MC **Hoda Kotb**



Mark Wildman of The Parenting Group accepts Literacy Champion Award from Miss Teen USA **Kamie Crawford**



Reach Out and Read of Greater New York program director **Monique Hardin-Cordero**, director of program development and outreach **Brian Gallagher**, national medical director **Perri Klass, MD** and executive director **Traci Lester**.



ESPN Radio host and auctioneer **Robin Lundberg**

with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together.

Reach Out and Read currently serves one-third of the most impoverished children in the U.S. The Reach Out and Read model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the program has one

of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. This year, Reach Out and Read's 27,000 volunteer doctors and nurse practitioners will provide 6.4 million new books to 3.9 million children at 4,654 healthcare locations in all 50 states.

(Photos by *Lori Hedding*)



Reach Out and Read of Greater New York regional program coordinator **Ra'Chaun Rogers**, administrative manager **Asari Beale** and AmeriCorps Volunteer at Caribbean-American Family Health Center in Brooklyn **Jessica China**



Scholastic Inc. president **Judy Newman** and vice president **Karine Apollon**