
For Immediate Release

Top New York City Figures Gather in Support of Literacy Partners to Open PUSH: A Comprehensive Resource Center Providing Pathways Out of Poverty for Harlem Residents

On September 8, 2011, **Literacy Partners**, New York City's only nationally accredited adult literacy program, held the Grand Opening of the Harlem Literacy Zone Partner's United In Strengthening Harlem (PUSH). With a program emceed by FOX5 News Anchor **Dari Alexander**, Literacy Partners celebrated the unveiling with local officials, students and representatives from the center's partners.

In her remarks, Executive Director **Susan A. McLean** explained PUSH in more detail, outlining how the center will provide pathways out of poverty for the local Harlem community. This **Literacy Zone**, one of 35 currently piloted by the New York State Board of Regents and the State Education Department, provides a systemic focus on meeting the literacy needs of the community, from birth through adult. This strategy builds on the Asset Model, strengthening the community by building on existing assets and in collaboration with local organizations. "No one agency could ever undertake this alone. The importance of our partnerships within the community is vital for executing this project," said McLean.

Bob Purga, Supervisor for the **New York State Education Department's Adult Education and Workforce Development** team and the architect behind the Literacy Zone initiative, addressed the great range of cooperation it requires to make an impact on the community. As Literacy Zones seek to close the gaps for many individuals, Purga congratulated Literacy Partners for their work. "Your leadership is going to help reshape the literacy landscape in New York State," he said.

Held in a PUSH classroom at the Oberia Dempsey Multi Service Center (127 West 127th Street), ceremony attendees included Richard Fish, on behalf of **Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav** and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, Safiya Raheem, on behalf of **Council Member Inez Dickens**, **Elyse Barbell** of the Literacy Assistance Center. Also in attendance were Literacy Partners Board President **Mark Jackson** and distinguished board member **Sharon King Hoge**.

The event was also attended by **Althea Burton** of Project Enterprise, **Simone Eccleston** of Harlem Stage, **Ned Gardner** and **Joan Staunton** of Henry Street Settlement, **Barbara Grant** of West Harlem Head Start, **Glamis Haro** of Union Settlement, **Thalia Kwok** of Harlem YMCA, **Traci Lester** and **Karen Preuss** of Reach Out & Read, **Rita Lopez** and **Maritza Pritsos** of HANAC, **Lauren McConatha** and **Heeyeon Park** of New York Cares, **Tiana McFarlane** of New York Urban League, **Seaku Nevo** of Youth at Risk, **Varel Nichols** of New York City Mission Society, **David Perez** of Harlem EOC, **Rodney Alexander** and **Carmel Paleski** of SUNY MEOC, **Javier Ramirez** of Cabrini Immigrant Services, and **Rose Rivera** of Whedco Head Start .

PUSH has begun offering a selection of courses, ranging from adult basic education and Pre-GED to classes leading to the GED. Additionally, PUSH case managers will offer personal needs and family assessments at the center's Family Welcome Center. Once evaluated, individuals and their families will be connected with resources in addition to Literacy Partner's adult education classes, incorporating health and financial literacy curricula, and ongoing employment workshops and jobs counseling. Case workers will arrange appointments with other needed services and resources, manage progress and provide ongoing support and assistance through meticulous follow-up.

About Literacy Partners

For nearly 40 years, Literacy Partners has helped thousands of New Yorkers learn the basic reading, writing and math skills needed to succeed in day-to-day living. Through successful collaborations with major corporations, community partners and benefactors, Literacy Partners offers small, welcoming classes taught by credentialed teachers, supported by enthusiastic, highly trained, volunteer tutors. Literacy Partners is the only nationally accredited adult literacy program serving New York City. For more information, visit www.literacypartners.org.

About PUSH

Partners United in Strengthening Harlem (PUSH) is Literacy Partners new initiative in the Central Harlem Literacy Zone. This reform project was developed by the New York State Board of Regents and the State Education Department to provide a systemic focus on meeting the literacy needs of communities, from birth through adult. The goal of PUSH is to provide pathways out of poverty through education, as well as an array of additional services. This includes instructional programs in adult literacy below the post-secondary level and related support services, such as educational counseling and guidance.

In addition, PUSH offers a central location to address the needs of the Harlem community including: adult education, career and employee counseling, early childhood through high school education support, help for at-risk youth, college advising, pre and post-natal services, mental health support for mothers, specialized health services criminal justice assistance for women and more. PUSH's Family Welcome Center will serve as the primary location for literacy services and referrals for wrap-around services. Both Literacy Partners students, as well as others in the community seeking assistance, can benefit from the services provided.

PUSH Partners include Bread and Roses Integrated Arts High School, Harlem Center for Education-Educational Opportunity Center, Harlem Children's Zone, Harlem Children's Zone- Promise Academy Charter Schools, Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc., Harlem Stage, Harlem Vet Center, Latino Commission on AIDS, New York Cares, Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, Inc., Project Enterprise, Reach Out and Read, State University of New York, Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center, The DOME Project, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, Urban Justice Center, West Harlem Community Organization Head Start Pre-School Program, West Harlem Community Organization Inc. Head start Program and Women's Prison Association.

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