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**PARTNERSHIP WITH CHILDREN'S OPEN HEART - OPEN MIND PROGRAM
HOSTS FIRST ANNUAL EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS DAY
AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 258 IN BED STUY**

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**BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT MARTY MARKOWITZ AND
GIANTS DEFENSIVE END/SOPRANO AND OZ ACTOR FRANK FERRARA
SPEAK TO KIDS ABOUT OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL**

Bedford Stuyvesant, NY -- Partnership with Children's Open Heart – Open Mind Program recently hosted Junior High School 258's first Emotional Health and Wellness Day dedicated to helping at risk youth better cope with the social and emotional pressures of daily life. The day was facilitated by the program's social work staff, which trained 60 student council members on life and leadership skills. Acting as school leaders, the students were instrumental in coordinating the day with Partnership with Children staff.

Keynote speakers Borough President Marty Markowitz and New York Giant Defensive Lineman Frank Ferrara offered personal stories of success and ideas about how the students could better take care of their minds, bodies and emotional selves during these troubling times.

"I know from my own background that by committing yourselves to work hard and not quitting, you can prepare yourselves for whatever you desire. What you decide to do with your time now will determine the value of your education," said Markowitz. "You can use your years in school to help you grow in ways that will profit not only yourselves, but that will benefit your entire community."

Ferrara talked about how he represented the "all American dream," growing up in single-parent home without much money or resources and how he overcame the obstacles of growing up in Bensonhurst. Ferrara spoke to 150 seventh- and eighth-grade students in the auditorium and then spoke to the students in their classrooms about the need to stay in school, keep healthy, stay away from negative peer influences and always reach toward achieving their goals.

Barbara Cavallo the clinical director at Partnership with Children and the Open Heart – Open Mind Program's founder said, "Our hope is that the students at JHS 258 will begin to shift away from their erroneous and stigmatizing beliefs

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that emotional and mental distress is due to an individual's weakness and move toward a more systemic-environmental view of their problems. The knowledge gained from this day will leave the students to reach out and obtain solutions to their social/emotional difficulties through therapy, counseling and positive group membership as acceptable responses to their problems. The conference will also be the platform through which the student council will establish a health and wellness agenda for the JHS 258 school community."

The Open Heart - Open Mind program, offered to the students of JHS 258, is designed to improve the climate of underserved elementary and middle schools by aiding at-risk students in managing their feelings so that they are better able to channel their energies into learning. Its social workers focus on the "whole youth" and the adults whose role it is to support and nurture them by implementing full classroom groups, small groups, individual counseling, crisis intervention, family counseling and parental support, teacher collaboration, school-wide activities, school governance and district consulting.

JHS 258 is one of the lower-performing schools and its students continue to be challenged by poverty and other family and community issues, which often prohibit them from succeeding in school. Student Kiara Davis wrote a poem specifically for the school's Emotional Health and Wellness Day entitled, "Where can we learn?"

*Where can we learn in an environment filled with gangs and no love?
Where can we learn in a school of all color that ain't getting along?
Where can we learn in a community filled with drugs and children giving up?
Believe we can achieve.
Believe in you and me.
Believe in a community.
Believe we can learn and strive 4 our dreams.
The world may be involved with much chaos and stupidity,
But if you people believe we can achieve, we must, don't we?
Don't stop believing.
Don't stop achieving.
Just be yourself and try and be me.
Where can you learn if there's no me and there's no one believing in you and for me?*

"There is much important work to be done in the world and, if you stick with whatever challenges you face, your opportunities to do good things in the world will be as limitless as your imagination," said Markowitz. "So don't listen to the nay sayers. Take it from me. You can achieve your dreams. You can accomplish your goals. You just have to believe in yourself."

Partnership with Children, formerly Big Sisters, inc., was founded in 1908 and is committed to strengthening the emotional, social and cognitive skills of at-risk children so that they can succeed in school, in society and in their lives. Today, Partnership with Children serves over 5,000 at-risk children and adolescents in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens through its various programs