

Project Aspire Expands with New Partnerships, Staff and Community Outreach

IN ITS THIRD YEAR of operation, Touro College's Project Aspire public health and education initiative extended its reach and impact on inner city schoolchildren through a series of key partnerships, funding pledges from New York City and State, new staff, an innovative pre-school instructional program, several high-profile events, and expansion of the program to middle school and high school for the first time.

Project Aspire, which encourages students to pursue healthy lifestyles and health careers, expanded its partnerships with Health and Hospital Corp./Harlem Hospital's renowned Hip Hop H.E.A.L.S. (Healthy Eating And Living in Schools) program, the Natural Gourmet Institute, The Palette Fund, the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (TouroCOM), the Touro College of Pharmacy and the Graduate School of Health Sciences. The relationship with TouroCOM has resulted in 17 students from New York City high schools being accepted to the Fast Track to Medical School option at TouroCOM.

"It's nice to know that Project Aspire has helped make some dreams come true and contributed to the lives of the children and families that we work with," said Stephen Phillips, executive director of Project Aspire. "The fact that Project Aspire has been instrumental in helping our students get accepted to the Fast



P.S. 197 students give Project Aspire "Yes I Can!" salute

Track to Medical School at TouroCOM is evidence that this option is having significant impact."

In addition, elementary schoolchildren at P.S. 197, The John B. Russwurm School, in Harlem, where the program launched in 2007, are more aware of the need for daily exercise and a healthy diet to combat obesity, more prepared to seek help for

themselves or family members suffering from a stroke, and are more knowledgeable about careers in the health profession than most of their peers.

"I think the whole (Project Aspire) program is awesome," said P.S. 197 Principal Renardo Wright. "It gives our kids the opportunity to think outside the box and to think of careers that they may not have thought of before. If you don't grab the children at an early age, you sort of start to lose them, especially boys, so the idea is to try to hook them into learning while they're very, very young and open their eyes to an array of careers and opportunities. That's why this is so important. Hopefully, the children will also take on a lifestyle of healthy living and healthy eating and that's very vital because in our community obesity is going to be growing and growing, especially among young children. In the Harlem community, we probably have the highest rate of obesity in the Manhattan area."

P.S. 197 Assistant Principal Paulette Johnson said Project Aspire has moti-

continued on page 39



(L-R) BHSMS students with Principal William Quintana (partially hidden), City Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera and Project Aspire Executive Director Stephen Phillips