

May 15, 2009

## HEALTHY LIVING & ADULT LIFESTYLES

### 200 students attend Project Aspire program to learn how to combat obesity, diabetes, and ID signs of stroke

More than 200 students, in pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, from P.S. 197 in Harlem and the Bronx High School for Medical Science, gathered at the high school on April 14 to learn from Touro College's Project Aspire program how to combat obesity, diabetes, and to learn to signs of an individual having a stroke. New York City Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera, Harlem Hospital, and the National Stroke Association partnered with Touro to help inspire the future health practitioners, and to award scholarships.

Project Aspire, a public health initiative of the Children's Health Education Foundation at Touro College, brings real-life, interactive health education lessons into schools to encourage students to lead healthy lifestyles and pursue health careers, including becoming physicians and pharmacists at such places as the newly founded Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine and Touro College of Pharmacy, both in Harlem. Project Aspire is a pipeline to identify minority students who may wish to pursue careers as doctors, helping fulfilling

TouroCOM's mission of serving the underserved and reaching out to the community.

At the event, Rivera and Project Aspire announced that three outstanding Bronx High School for Medical Science students were accepted into the Touro College B.S./DO Fast Track for Medical School seven-year course of study, a collaboration of TouroCOM and the New York School of Career and Applied Studies. The aspiring doctors are seniors Elvis Boansi, Chanaia Curry-Griffith, and Shantae Fyffe. Thirty-six other students were awarded the opportunity to attend a free, three-credit course, Introduction to Health Sciences, taught at the Bronx High School for Medical Science by faculty from the school and TouroCOM.

"Project Aspire gets kids motivated to learn about healthier lifestyles, and to take care of themselves. It gives them a shot at something they need but do not have — longevity," said Rivera. "As chair of the Health committee, I've seen the alarming rates of obesity in young children in New York, which is 50 percent. We need to

find a targeted approach to combat obesity, which leads to diabetes, heart problems, and stroke."

At the event, the Project Aspire team taught the students about exercise through its "Motion is the Potion" daily exercise for life-long health component and by using interactive video games — GameBike and Dance Pad — hooked up to real-time video monitors, as well as the importance of metabolic testing and nutrition. The Touro College School of Health Sciences conducted Resting Metabolic Rate testing. The award-winning Harlem Hospital/National Stroke Association's Hip Hop Stroke program had the students on their feet as they learned a rap song that teaches the signs of stroke. The students learned to look for changes in the face, a limp arm, slurred speech, and to call 911 if they think an individual is having a stroke. Professional chefs trained at the Natural Gourmet Institute, another Project Aspire partner, prepared healthy foods and provided recipes to all in attendance.

Students and faculty from the Touro College of Pharmacy, also in Harlem and a partner of Project Aspire, provided label literacy information dealing with prescription medicines and over-the-counter drugs.

Dr. Olajide Williams of Harlem Hospital, the "Hip Hop Doc" and co-creator of the Hip Hop Stroke program with rapper Doug E. Fresh, shared a story with the students about a fourth-grader who, after learning the signs of stroke, helped save the life of an elderly woman on a subway platform in the Bronx. The fourth-grader knew that her slurred speech meant that she needed help. He called 911 and she is doing well today.