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PLAYING UP! INITIATIVE DONATES CLASSROOM BOOKS TO PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO ENCOURAGE MENTORSHIP
Successful Paterson Role Models and Youth Organizations to Participate in Support

(April 16, 2015)--Paterson, NJ– To support and encourage the positive impact mentoring can have on a young person’s life, Author Vaughn L. McKoy and Manifest Destiny, Inc. will donate 5,500 books along with the accompanying 308-page teacher’s resource guide that meets New Jersey State curriculum standards to Paterson Public and Charter Schools. The resource guide provides critical thinking questions, quizzes and additional learning techniques.

The book, Playing Up: One Man’s Rise from Public Housing to Public Service through Mentorship and the accompanying new Coaches’ Playbook and Teaching Resources will be used in traditional public and charter school curricula for grades 6 through 12.

Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent for Paterson Public Schools will accept the academic gift on behalf of the district. “Positive role models are very important; and when our students are able to learn from successful ‘Patersonians’ who grew up under similar circumstances, it helps to instill hope and promise for their own bright future,” says Superintendent, Dr. Donnie Evans. “Mr. McKoy is an example of such success, and we are truly appreciative of his generous book donation. We intend to utilize these books – which detail his personal journey – as we strive to enhance character education for grades 6 – 12 through literacy.”

The Playing Up! Mentorship initiative was created by Paterson, NJ native and author, Vaughn McKoy, former Assistant United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey and former president of the PSEG Foundation. McKoy penned his life story in Playing Up: One Man’s Rise from Public Housing to Public Service through Mentorship. Through his story, readers learn that McKoy is the youngest of six siblings and a product of an impoverished single mom in public housing. Unlike his siblings and friends, he becomes convinced, thanks to mentors, that life has more to offer than drugs, gangs, and prison. Despite becoming a teenage dad, McKoy strives for athletic excellence, but learns through his mentors that there are more career paths out of public housing than just sports.

New York Giants wide receiver and fellow ‘Patersonian’ Victor Cruz says, “I know firsthand that the benefits of mentorship are powerful. I would not have been successful in school or in my sports career, if it wasn’t for the mentors in my life,” says Victor Cruz. “So, naturally I am excited to support this effort created by my fellow Paterson native Vaughn McKoy to help Paterson youth understand the importance of learning from their predecessors, in addition to learning from their teachers.”

The formal donation will take place Wednesday, April 22 at 9 am at the Playing Up! Mentorship Panel. McKoy will make a gift of 5,000 books to Paterson Public Schools and 500 books to Robert Guarasci, founder of Garret Morgan Academy and The Community Charter School of Paterson for use in the 2015-16 school year.

A roundtable discussion on the importance of mentorship in a young person’s life will follow the donation of books. Details below.
WHAT: Playing Up! Mentorship Panel and Book Donation

WHEN: Wednesday, April 22, 2015

WHERE: New Jersey Community Development Corporation
32 Spruce Street
Paterson, NJ, 07501

TIME: 9:00 am -11:30 am

WHO: Remarks by:

- Author Vaughn L. McKoy and special guests
- NJ Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly, 35th District
- Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent of Paterson Public Schools
- Stephanie Wilson, Executive Director, NJ Amistad Commission, Department of Education
- Briana Thevenin, Program Director, Victor Cruz Foundation

Panelists Include:

- Walter Fields, CEO and Executive Editor, NorthStarNews.com
- Bob Guarasci, CEO, New Jersey Community Development Corporation
- Carlos Lejnieks, CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson and Union Counties
- Dr. Lennox Small, Principal, Benjamin Franklin Middle School, Teaneck, New Jersey
- Katrina Wade, Middle School Teacher, Link Community School, Newark, NJ

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