

PEER HEALTH EXCHANGE

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Peer Health Exchange's *A Night Out for Health* showcases the value of health education

February 6, 2019—New York, NY— Nearly 200 philanthropic, education, and youth advocate leaders celebrated Peer Health Exchange's annual benefit *A Night Out for Health*, February 6, in support of the organization's work to advance health equity and improve health outcomes for young people in all five boroughs.

The event held at Housing Works, also marked Peer Health Exchange's 15th year providing health education to ninth grade students at New York Public Schools. This is done through an innovative near-peer model that trains 600 college volunteers from Barnard College; Brooklyn College; City College; College of Staten Island; Columbia University; Fordham University; LaGuardia Community College; Queens College; Hunter College; New York University; St. John's University; York College; and Wagner College to deliver skills-based health workshops to youth across the city.

Attendees heard firsthand about the impact of this work from Petrides High School ninth grade student Mateo. In his speech, Mateo shared his experience with the Peer Health Exchange Health Educator Jolie Gutierrez.

"Through having Jolie teach every week, I realized she's someone that I could open up to and I don't open up to people easily," said Mateo. "We have stuff in common. I trust her. She is sort of like a big cousin or a sister. I have a hard time sometimes talking about issues. But she definitely taught me the importance of how to talk about my problems.

Peer Health Exchange's curriculum spans over the course of 13 weeks. Workshops equip ninth graders with the knowledge, skills and resources to make healthy decisions about substance use, sexual health and mental health.

"We held a focus group with 9th graders in our program last month where they expressed how much they wanted to learn about mental health – particularly anxiety and stress - and how much they appreciated having someone that's closer in age who makes learning more relevant," said Peer Health Exchange New York Executive Director Rachael Peters. "We heard that college students have a more 'fresh experience,' and they have been 'through the things that they talk about.' The students clarified that it is not that teachers haven't, but volunteers deliver it in a different more honest way that resonates more strongly because of the close age."

Over the last decade, Peer Health Exchange has grown to provide their trauma-informed, skills-based health curriculum to over 30,000 young people across the city while building a culture of preventative health and wellness. This year it has reached 6,000 ninth graders in 54 high schools across New York.

Empowering young people to make healthy decisions

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New York's young people face difficult decisions every day, many of which threaten their bodies, well-being, and futures. According to the CDC, among New York high school students:

- 1 in 5 binge drinks
- 1 in 6 has seriously considered attempting suicide
- 2 in 5 sexually active teens did not use a barrier method the last time they had sex

All young people deserve the knowledge, skills, and access to resources they need to make healthy decisions. Health education improves young people's health outcomes, high school graduation rates, and life opportunities.

Peer Health Exchange is grateful for funding support from our sponsors: Pam Jones and Craig Russell, Mike and Susie Seigel, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Nate and Baily Kempner, Nancy Settergren and Augoustis Ramoundos, Taconic Capital, Oxeon Partners, Julie and Dave Friedland, Dana Zucker and Brahm Cramer, and Wendy and Doug Eisenberg

It also extends a special thank you to its host committee: Pamela Jones, Sabrina Baronberg, Robert Berry, Peter Bokor, Christian Channel, Michael Cullen, Morgan Eifler, Dina Epstein, David Feirstein, Susan Getz, Eva Giocochea, Taylor Gramps, Mike Grobstein, Mia Hamamoto, Jess Jacobs, Mia Jung, Wesley Mittman LePatner, Andrea London, Nate Kempner, Jessica Marshall, Brynne McNulty, Alex Muresanu, Christina Oros, Lori Roth, Jill Seigerman, Nancy Settergren, Jocelyn Sontag, Rachel and Robin Thebault, Flory Wilson and Dana Zucker.

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About Peer Health Exchange Peer Health Exchange's mission is to empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and resources to make healthy decisions. We do this by training college student volunteers to teach a skills-based health curriculum in under-resourced high schools across the country.