



PRESS RELEASE—

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Peer Health Exchange's *Paint the Town Orange* honors Boston trailblazers working to advance health equity

November 8, 2018—Boston, MA— *Paint the Town Orange*, Peer Health Exchange's annual Boston benefit, honored a legacy paved by some of the organization's earliest partners to advance health equity throughout the region November 7, 2019. Trailblazers like Boston Community Leadership Academy host teacher Mitchell Hercule, and Josiah Quincy Upper School site coordinator Agatha Tong were honored as star awardees in recognition of their important contributions.

"The theme of today's celebration is Trailblazers—it's a reflection on our goal to push the boundaries and be the first in our approach in providing high quality, high impact, health education program," Robin Rich, Chief Operating Officer, told those in attendance. "We have trailblazers in this room tonight: some of you have supported our work since its inception."

Held at WeWork One Seaport Square, *Paint the Town Orange* also marked Peer Health Exchange's 13th year providing health education to ninth grade students at Boston Public Schools. This is done through an innovative near-peer model that trains 280 college volunteers from the Northeastern University; Boston University; Tufts University; and Harvard University to deliver skills-based health workshops to youth across the city.

Attendees also heard firsthand about the impact of this work from Peer Health Exchange's incoming Executive Director James Lin. In his speech, Lin shared his experiences at Peer Health Exchange as a Program Manager and Senior Manager of Program Development and Delivery and how that has shaped his leadership as he transitions into his new role.

"I made it because I found folks I could relate to, who I felt comfortable with, who dreamt with me, who made me feel confident in myself, who pushed me, believed in me, wanted good things for me," said Lin. "And that, at its core, is what we do at PHE: create connection, trust, and relationships in service of empowering young people to lead healthy and happy lives."

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.

Over the last decade, Peer Health Exchange has grown to provide their trauma-informed, skills-based health curriculum to more than 30,000 young people across the city while building a culture of preventative health and wellness. This year it has reached 3,550 ninth graders in 17 high schools across Boston.

[Empowering young people to make healthy decisions](#)

PEER HEALTH EXCHANGE

Young Bostonians face difficult decisions every day, many of which threaten their bodies, well-being, and futures. According to the CDC, among Boston 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.

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It also extends a special thank you to its benefit committee: Margot Phillips, Cristina de Guzman, Bridget Bunda, Rimi Chaudhuri, Laura Degirolami, Trevor Marrero; Janet Nahirny, Carol Pieper; Francine Rosenzweig, Gina Yianopoulos

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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.