



{

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Risa B. Hoag, Harquin Creative, 914-996-8100, risabh@gmail.com



New Rochelle Youth Leadership Team pictured L-R: **Nahal Yousefin**, Chief HR Officer for Educators of Excellence; **Daniel Bonnet**, Area Director, New Rochelle CAP Center of WestCOP; **Christian Gonzales**, Case Manager, New Rochelle CAP Center of WestCOP; **Emma Silva**, President, Mascaro, Boys and Girls Club Women's Auxiliary; **Kwamain Dixon**, Assistant Case Manager, New Rochelle Housing Authority; **Timothy McKnight**, Director of Residential Services, New Rochelle Municipal Housing Authority; **Alejandro Alvarez**, Director, Soulful Synergy; **Nate Adams**, Director of Operations, Boys & Girls Club; **Amanda Torres**, Case Manager, WestCOP, New Rochelle CAP; **Omar Small**, Village Administrator, Pelham.

Not pictured: **Rob Johnson**, City of New Rochelle Police Dept.; **Alprentice McCutchen**, New Rochelle High School History Teacher;

Photo credit: Sherry Bruck

Virtual Youth Town Hall Series Kicks off in New Rochelle

(WESTCHESTER) September 8, 2020—The Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board (WPWDB), in association with area youth service agencies, is hosting a series of **Virtual Youth Town Halls**—forums for questions, ideas, and opinions voiced by and for youth of Westchester and Putnam counties. The Youth Town Halls put young adults front and center, providing them with a platform to voice their concerns and opinions and facilitate discussions on topics of their choosing, including the current political climate, career options, job training, college prep, internships opportunities, culture shifts, inspirational stories, and their overall future outlook at a time of massive unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual town halls originate locally, where youth leaders guide and gather input from the youth registered in TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families), and SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Programs). In the upcoming months, youth will also be included from the WPWDB's year round WIOA Youth Employment Services programs and Federal Re-Entry projects located in the cities of Yonkers and Mt. Vernon, NY.

The first Youth Town Hall kicked off in New Rochelle, on August 28, incorporating agency partners *New Rochelle Municipal Housing Authority, New Rochelle CAP Center of WestCOP, Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle, and My Brother's Keeper*. The town hall program was led by **Timothy McKnight**, *Director of Residential Services, New Rochelle Municipal Housing Authority*, and **Daniel Bonnet**, *Area Director, New Rochelle CAP Center of WestCOP*. The ambitious agenda included eight speakers who each presented a topic to all participants who were then welcomed into smaller breakout Zoom sessions facilitated by Youth Facilitators who kicked off the discussions and acted as scribes. The youth-selected topics included: *Success and Motivation, Career Pathways and the Work Environment; Financial Literacy; College Prep; Mentorship; Cultural Sensitivities; and Social Justice*.

New Rochelle presenters also included: **Rob Johnson**, *City of New Rochelle Police Dept.*; **Nate Adams**, *Director of Operations, Boys & Girls Club*; **Nahal Yousefin**, *Chief HR Officer for Educators Of Excellence*; **Alprentice McCutchen**, *New Rochelle High School History Teacher*; **Omar Small**, *Village Administrator, Pelham*; and **Alejandro Alvarez**, *Director, Soulful Synergy*.

Youth Facilitators included: Brian Penn, Shaheira Jones, Cassandra Chavez, Rhianna Crosland

Approximately 50 people took part in the New Rochelle event. The participants expressed their appreciation at being included in these important discussions and the opportunity to speak openly and be heard. All agreed that the Youth Town Halls are vital and would like more opportunities to express themselves, learn, and grow.

"Now is the time to make a big change. As black and brown citizens, we've been fighting for inclusion in the United States, but realize that society misses out on our genius if they don't include us. What steps can we take? Starting with yourself, be aware that differences exist without assigning value to the differences. Recognize that your culture is not better than anyone else's," encouraged Alejandro Alvarez.

Subsequent youth town hall meetings are currently being planned by separate locales and will involve partner agencies as follows:

1. **Mount Vernon:** WestHab, Inc., Guidance Center of Westchester, Mount Vernon Youth Bureau, Youth Shelter of Westchester, Urban League of Westchester
2. **White Plains-Greenburgh:** White Plains Youth Bureau, Westchester County Youth Bureau, The Slater Center, Theodore Young Center, Port Chester Youth Bureau
3. **Peekskill-Putnam:** Peekskill Youth Bureau, Putnam WestCOP, Inc.
4. **Yonkers:** Children's Village, STRIVE Future Leaders Re-Entry Project

The date and time of each will be determined by the local leader. Upcoming Town Halls that are being planned may have a host of other partnering youth service agencies and community based organizations involved as well.

WPWDB's Executive Director, **Thom Kleiner** stated, "I'd like to thank **Allison Jones**, retired Program Specialist Employment & Training, for her passion and commitment to the youth of Westchester and Putnam counties. Allison recently retired at the end of July and the Youth Town Hall is her brainchild that she continues to lead as a volunteer. As a board, we are committed to helping the youth of our counties find their way in this volatile work environment. These virtual town halls are meant to inspire, educate, promote, and build the leadership skills necessary to move forward in these challenging times."

"Our mission is to cultivate positive relationships by listening and respecting our youth's voices and opinions. The Town Hall inspired our youth to strive towards excellence, while teaching them that their voices are the engine of change. They are already planning the next town hall and plan to include their parents," added **Timothy McKnight**, *Director of Residential Services, New Rochelle Municipal Housing Authority*

THE WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WPWDB) is comprised of leaders and staff of state and county government agencies, non-profits, public education, and the private sector who work together to strengthen the partnerships between business, education, and service providers within the "Career Center Network" to meet the needs for a skilled workforce. The WPWDB pursues funding opportunities and develops model programs and leading-edge practices. The "Network" is made up of four Career Centers (White Plains, Mount Vernon, Peekskill, and Carmel) as well as partner agencies that provide state-of-the-art technology, training, resources, and services to youth, adults and employers. For more information, visit www.westchesterputnamonestop.com.

Follow Westchester–Putnam Workforce Development Board



[Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [Twitter](#) / [LinkedIn](#)

###