



College to Fund Stockton Champions of Youth Program in Affiliation with Boys and Girls Club

Youth-Mentoring Program Serves High School Students in Atlantic City

For Immediate Release; with photo of Michael Everett

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

**Contact: Maryjane Briant
News and Media Relations Director
Galloway Township, NJ 08205
Maryjane.Briant@stockton.edu
(609) 652-4593**

Galloway Township, NJ - A youth-mentoring program that virtually stopped the dropout rate among hundreds of participants at Atlantic City High School over the past eight years will be funded and run by The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey as the Stockton Champions of Youth.

The Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City, which formerly operated the program with help from Stockton, has agreed to have the college assume financial and programming responsibility. The club has said it suffered a shortfall in funding and is working to remain open this summer with help from the community.

"Stockton is committed to serving the community and helping young people become all that they can be," said President Herman Saatkamp, who is also a member of the Boys and Girls Club board. "Champions of Youth challenges students, helps them to plan for the future, and provides resources to ensure their success."

"We are bringing under our umbrella this incredibly successful program, and through this affiliation with the Boys and Girl Club, we will continue its momentum and growth," President Saatkamp said.

All but one of the students who participated in the Champions of Youth program over the past eight years completed high school and 50 percent of them are attending four-year colleges, said Director Michael Everett, who will be employed by Stockton.

On Sunday, May 11, Melissa Luna became the first Champion to graduate from Stockton, with a degree in Sociology. The 22-year-old Atlantic City resident said she is the first in her family to graduate from a college. She said her 16-year-old sister is now in the Champions program.

-more-

-continued from page 1-

“When I was a freshman in high school, I didn’t think I was going to college,” Luna said. “Then being in the program opened doors for me, career-wise.”

She said she was motivated in part by the chance to earn points by attending Champions sessions, which lead special to trips at the end of each year. Luna said she was able to visit California, Boston, New York and Paris.

The program’s community service projects also kept her interested, including helping with beach cleanups and at Sister Jean’s Kitchen, which provides food for the under-privileged in Atlantic City.

Luna graduated from the teacher education program at Stockton Sunday and also has worked at Stockton’s Office of Student Affairs.

The college will continue the Stockton Champions of Youth’s affiliation with the Boys and Girls Club’s Youth of the Year program. In three of the of the past five years, the NJ Boys and Girls Club State Youth of the Year has come from the Atlantic City club and in each case the winner was part of the Champions of Youth program. The NJ winner is chosen from among 85,000 club members statewide, and the winner receives a \$22,000 scholarship.

Sparkle Prevard, the current Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year, will be competing for the state title on June 3. Prevard will be attending Stockton as a freshman this fall.

The Stockton Champions of Youth program serves 30-40 high school students per year for a total of about 320 students since its inception, Everett said. He was a teacher and guidance counselor at Atlantic City High School for 32 years and has been running the Champions program since it began. He will now work out of Stockton’s main facility in Atlantic City, the Carnegie Center.

The director manages the daily operations of the program and acts as the case manager, recruiting and training mentors for students throughout their high school career.

“This program does not work without the support and dedication of our mentors,” Everett said. “For the past eight years I have led this program and I am very pleased that President Saatkamp and Stockton College stepped in to maintain our success.”

The Stockton Champions of Youth program will be offered at Stockton’s Atlantic City facilities and at Atlantic City High School. It provides students with mentoring and a case manager, and offers experiences and opportunities outside the classroom, including community service and career awareness.

A Miniversity component created in partnership with Stockton will continue to offer experiences outside the traditional classroom and provide opportunities to enrich the students’ academic experience. This includes forums on the college campus focusing on academics, the arts, sport, community service, wellness, and campus life. Champions are required to attend a minimum of six events in the various focus areas to earn a Miniversity certificate from Stockton.

Through the Stockton Champions’ school-to-school initiative, Atlantic City High School seniors can also elect to enroll at Atlantic Cape Community College and earn a maximum of 12 college credits that may be applied toward a degree program. That initiative is in partnership with the Atlantic City Public Schools and Superintendent Donna Hays. # # #