



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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TEEN PARENTING PROGRAM RECOGNIZED FOR ITS COMMUNITY SERVICE **Public Health Week Ceremony Honors Young Parents Achieve**

County Executive Robert P. Astorino joined Westchester County Board of Health President Douglas Aspros, DVM, and distinguished guests today as the Board of Health awarded the 2010 Distinguished Public Health Service Award to Young Parents Achieve, a Westchester Jewish Community Services program.

“On behalf of county residents, we appreciate the important work you do and are fortunate to have you working alongside us to improve the health of teenage mothers and their babies,” Astorino said at the award ceremony at the YWCA of White Plains.

Since 1994, Young Parents Achieve has served more than 450 pregnant and parenting teenagers in White Plains, New Rochelle, Sleepy Hollow, Ossining, Port Chester, Peekskill, Shrub Oak and Cortlandt Manor. Under the direction of Paula Santa-Donato, participants receive pre- and post-natal care. The program assists clients by linking them to prenatal healthcare services and ensuring that they receive postpartum care after their pregnancies. The program also ensures that the infants born to program clients receive primary health care and health insurance coverage. Teen parents also receive information about and referrals to quality child care and most participants return to school or enroll in a GED or ESL program. The dedicated staff members of Young Parents Achieve provide intensive case management, clinical assessment, individual counseling, support groups and parent education.

“We are grateful for your efforts and your success on behalf of teenage mothers in Westchester,” said Dr. Douglas Aspros. “Your help allows teenage mothers to thrive and prepare for a productive future and build a better foundation for their babies. Your program and staff exemplify the highest level of commitment and distinguished public health service to our community. Congratulations, and thank you on behalf of the Westchester County Board of Health.”

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Paula Santa-Donato, the program's director, was joined at the YWCA of White Plains by teenage others who participated and described how this program has benefited them and their children.

"The program is essential," said Melina Vasquez, 18, who will graduate from White Plains High School in June and whose 2-year-old son, Mateo Aroz, attends the childcare program at the YWCA. "It helps me stay in school. It gives me moral support. Without it, a lot of girls would drop out of school."

"If it weren't for Paula and this program, I would still be in my house and I would not be going to school," said Katherine Tineo, 18, a student at the White Plains Community School whose 18-month-old son, Jorge Atimirano Jr., attends the city's Early Head Start Program. "The people in this program are like your family. They're always trying to help you. Even if they don't know the answer, they will try and find out for you. They're always there for you."

The Westchester County Board of Health works together with the County's Health Department to promote health, prevent disease and prolong meaningful life for Westchester residents. The Distinguished Public Health Service Award is presented by the Board of Health annually during Public Health Week to an individual or organization that exemplifies a commitment to public health. Award recipients are selected from nominations received by the Board of Health.