

Project GRAD LI and Westbury Public School District Collaborate on Spirited “College Day”

(Westbury, NY...April 28, 2009) In an all day program Thursday, April 30, 2009, Project GRAD LI will host “College Day” to launch a yearlong awareness campaign for the 3,772 students within the Westbury Union Free School District’s (UFSD) four elementary schools, middle school, and high school.

Project GRAD Long Island, in collaboration with the Westbury UFSD, strives to increase high school graduation and college attendance rates for low-income students. Project GRAD LI provides mentoring, scholarships, and a Summer Institute to support the reality that every child can attend college. In partnering with Westbury educators, family and friends, community and business leaders, the not-for-profit builds college awareness through activities and discussion beginning with pre-K and kindergarten classes and continuing through high school.

According to Project GRAD LI Program Director Kim Arias, College Day will be a spirited event and will include College Fairs, guest speakers and a 9:00 a.m. parade and rally at the Drexel Avenue School, 161 Drexel Avenue in Westbury. Programs and events will take place at each of the six District schools. The majority of the District’s 353 teachers will decorate their rooms and wear their college colors, spurring conversation and the sharing of college experiences with their students. Long Island colleges will be represented at College Fairs taking place at the Westbury Middle School and the High School.

Project Grad LI’s Board of Directors have arranged for over 45 dynamic guest speakers from fields as diverse as sports and entertainment, banking and finance, technology and information, law, healthcare, culinary arts, design, and fundraising, to volunteer their time to present to individual classrooms at the High School and Middle School beginning at 7:30 a.m. and on through 1 p.m. On 25-minute rotations, guests will include former NFL’s Donald McPherson, Sen. Schumer LI Director Gerry Patrella, Town of Islip IT Director Cedric Cleveland, News 12 LI Special Projects Producer Debi Gade, Island Harvest Executive Director Randi Dresner, Bethpage Federal Credit Union VP of Finance Jillian Hansen, among many others. Each will share how personal characteristics contribute to achievement, while college and continuing education has made possible the realization of their aspirations.

“Project GRAD LI invests in Long Island in the most meaningful way – through our youth,” said Kirk Kordeleski, Chairman of Project GRAD LI and President/CEO of Bethpage Federal Credit Union. “College Day is instructive, but also a spirited demonstration to these students that their welfare is our concern.”

College Day is a springboard for the Westbury School District’s ongoing efforts to build awareness and the confidence in students to pursue higher education. College Day is followed through the year by guidance counselors providing ongoing workshops on

college selection, financial aid applications, District-wide college fairs, and Project GRAD LI's summer program that simulates the experience of higher education by engaging students in exciting, relevant courses in a campus setting.

College Day Schedule of Events:

- 9:00 Parade and Rally, Drexel Avenue School, 161 Drexel Ave
- 11-12:15 College Fair – Westbury High School Gymnasium, 1 Post Rd
- 12:30 – 1:15 College Fair – Westbury Middle School Gymnasium, 455 Rockland St
- 3:15 p.m. Best Spirit Award presentation/reception, Westbury High School Library
Presented by Project GRAD USA President Daryl Ogden to the school voted as best interpreting college awareness.

Participating School Addresses:

Dryden Street School, Grades PK – 1, 545 Dryden St, Westbury
Park Avenue School, Grades 1-2, 100 Park Ave, Westbury
Drexel Avenue School, Grades 3-5, 161 Drexel Ave, Westbury
Powell's Lane Elementary, Grades 3-5, 603 Powells La, Westbury
Westbury Middle School, Grades 6-8, 455 Rockland St, Westbury
Westbury High School, Grades 9-12, 1 Post Rd, Westbury

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ABOUT PROJECT GRAD

Project GRAD is a comprehensive program at work in schools in more than 12 U.S. cities, where it is successfully improving academic achievement, college readiness and college access for students in disadvantaged districts. On Long Island (www.projectgradli.org), this work is taking place, primarily in the Westbury UFSD, in a collaborative partnership with district leadership. The PGLI board is supported by volunteer executives, chaired by Kirk Kordeleski (Bethpage Federal Credit Union).