Keys to Success Mentoring Program Held at Myers Recreation Center

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By Alexis Till

On Thursday May 18, 2023, Educators 4 Education's (E4E) Keys to Success Mentoring Program partnered with Full Being Services and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office's Youth Diversion Unit to provide a Mental Health Awareness workshop in Southwest at Myers Recreation Center for 21 teenage males.

Christopher Brown, Executive Director of Full Being Services stated, "The purpose of this session is to raise awareness about mental wellness and increase engagement amongst youth urban males. Full Being Services engages with youth at community partner organizations to lead regular mental wellness workshops that include discussions on mental health and the stigma of talk therapy. This educational and rapport-building experience has led to increased awareness, better engagement, and new language around their mental health, feelings, and emotions."

This event is a part of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, a nationwide push to end the stigma around mental illness and encourage the use of mental health resources. Mental health resources are particularly important for youth, as the National Alliance on Mental Illness states that approximately half of people that experience mental health problems notice symptoms before the age of 14.

Josiah, a participant and Southwest resident, discussed the importance of mental health awareness, "I learned that [mental Illness] is real. A lot of people go through problems. A lot of people are coping with pain. I learned that it is OK to reach out for help. You are trying to better yourself and stop your problems from being as big as they are."

Josiah stated that many young men turn to drugs in order to alleviate suffering, but this is not the answer, "A lot of young males think that drugs and everything can help with mental health problems. The drugs help for a little bit, but once the drugs wear off, they are back to feeling down. The problem didn't go away. They can get help by going to a therapist and getting the help they need." Mental illness often carries a stigma in both males and communities of color.

Jordan King, the director of Juvenile Diversion Programs for Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, also in attendance hopes programs like this help end these harmful notions, "Unfortunately, this stigma is rampant in communities of color across the nation. Philadelphia's young males may feel perceived as weak or fragile for having mental health challenges, or for communicating about mental health challenges, thus fueling this stigma. By promoting mental health awareness, we come closer to equipping youth with the agency and opportunity to speak out about grief, loss, trauma, and the host of other mental health challenges that many of us face."

Anthony Singleton, President, and CEO of Educators 4 Education, praised the importance of this event, "These are just the kind of opportunities that young people need right now. A safe space to express themselves and a better understanding of their emotions." Singleton further stated this work is made possible by funding from the City of Philadelphia's Anti-Violence Community Expansion Grant, and he looks forward to continuing this work.

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