



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DHS COMMISSIONER, SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR, AND NYC SERVICE PARTNER WITH SCHOLASTIC TO LAUNCH LITERACY PROGRAM IN 20 DHS SHELTERS, SERVING OVER 4,000 CHILDREN

Scholastic Inc. donates hundreds of books to 20 DHS shelters for the use of school-age residents

Four external literacy organizations and the New York Public Library have partnered with DHS and DOE to implement and support the pilot program

New York, NY – Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Gilbert Taylor, Department of Education Chancellor Carmen Fariña, NYC Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, and Scholastic Inc. today launched a pilot literacy program making available reading materials for school-age children living in 20 DHS shelters. The program includes books donated to each shelter from Scholastic Inc., and seeks to serve over 4,000 children. Scholastic has donated 170 books per shelter, including bilingual books.

To further enhance the initiative, NYC Service and DHS have formed partnerships with Jumpstart, Literacy Inc., Read Aloud, and Literacy Partners to help implement the project. NYC Service has been working to recruit volunteers to assist in the shelters' libraries. Additionally, DHS with the support of NYC Service has partnered with the Queens, Brooklyn, and New York Public Libraries to support the participating pilot libraries in each borough.

This afternoon at HELP Crotona shelter, a Bronx facility for families with children, city agency officials, public library representatives, and Scholastic gathered to unveil and introduce the library space. They were joined by special guest, "Clifford the Big Red Dog," who greeted and interacted with the children. Commissioner Taylor was joined by Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña, and representatives from Scholastic Inc., HELP USA, and the public libraries in each borough.

"We at DHS are committed to fostering the healthy development and educational attainment for all children living in our system. Making sure that children in shelter have books to read is fundamental to promoting academic achievement and enrichment," said **DHS Commissioner Gilbert Taylor**. "The generosity of Scholastic Inc. has greatly assisted us with this launch, as we make strides towards reducing homelessness and improving lives."

"Reading opens doors to different worlds and to deeper learning both in school and beyond. We know that having books at home helps students read and write at grade level. Every student – no matter what zip code they live in or challenges they face – should have easy access to books outside the classroom," said **Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. "Thanks to Scholastic and the Department of Homeless Services, we will ensure that we are putting more of our students on the right path to success."

“At Scholastic, we are committed to helping children learn to read and have access to books that bring joy, open doors of opportunity and ignite their imaginations,” said **Greg Worrell, President of Scholastic Classroom and Community Group**. “Without access to books, children are denied the opportunity to practice and develop the reading skills that allow them to succeed in school and life. Scholastic thanks our partners the Department of Homeless Services, the Department of Education and the New York City Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged (HELP USA), for ensuring we are able to get books into the hands of children and for being as committed as we are to supporting literacy for all children.”

“Building strategic partnerships and targeting New York City volunteers to help address our city’s needs is a critical part of NYC Service’s mission,” said **NYC Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin**. “We are proud to launch this collaborative partnership with the Department of Homeless Services, the Department of Education, and Scholastic Inc., and look forward to supporting our children's literacy development.”

"We all know that books are the window to the world, and with the reading materials donated by Scholastic, and this partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Homeless Services we have opened up a world of imagination for students and families living in Bronx shelters," said **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.** "At a time when we are making major strides to improve the literacy rate for students all over the city, and especially students in The Bronx, a literacy program providing free books and helping children develop a love of reading--especially our children who are most at risk-- is a definite step forward."

"Providing children with the materials they need to develop adequate reading skills is essential to ensuring they are successful in their academic future and it helps us combat the achievement gap that exists in our City," said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "I thank the Department of Homeless Services, Scholastic, the Department of Education and NYC Service for coming together to ensure more of our children are able to easily access the books they need to flourish."

“For 29 years HELP USA has been working hand-in-hand with the Department of Homeless Services to help homeless children,” said **HELP USA President and CEO Dr. Thomas Hameline**. “It is our responsibility, and our goal to serve these children and families as best we can - to provide them with safe homes, and to surround them with programs and services that allow them to grow up strong and healthy. That’s why we are so excited to be here with Scholastic and the Department of Education to open this new library.”

NYC DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES

The mission of the Department of Homeless Services is to prevent homelessness when possible and to provide emergency shelter for individuals and families who have no other housing options available to them. DHS employs a variety of innovative strategies to help families and individuals successfully exit shelter and return to self-sufficiency as quickly as possible.

Collaborating with other public agencies and non-profit partners, DHS works to prevent homelessness and assist New Yorkers in their transition to permanent housing. Furthermore, DHS remains committed to meeting its legal mandate to provide temporary, emergency shelter to those experiencing homelessness, while effectively creating neighborhood-based partnerships.

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