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Empire BlueCross BlueShield and Green Bronx Machine to Launch First Wheelchair Accessible Farm at Local Bronx Public School

NEW YORK – Green Bronx Machine (GBM), a nationally recognized non-profit organization dedicated to helping students live happier and healthier lives, is partnering with Empire BlueCross BlueShield (Empire) to launch the first wheelchair accessible farm and teaching kitchen in America at P.S. 721x, a District 75 school in the Bronx dedicated to educating students living with disabilities.

On Wednesday, February 13th, GBM and Empire will host a ribbon-cutting event at the school to unveil the new, in-school farm. In addition to the wheelchair accessible farm and teaching kitchen, P.S. 721x teachers and students will receive GBM's fully integrated health and wellness curriculum, a GBM Mobile Classroom Kitchen—a fully portable “indoor food truck” complete with sink, refrigerator, convection oven and food warmer and a media studio where students can participate in video conferences with other schools and organizations, post updates to social media, live stream educational programming and older students can record practice interview sessions.

GBM founder Stephen Ritz has built his program on the belief that healthy students drive healthy schools, which in turn drives healthy communities. To help educate students on the importance of proper nutrition, Stephen developed a fully integrated core curriculum that teaches students how to grow, eat and love their vegetables while also learning about math, science, and English in a fresh and engaging way.

In addition to forever changing their eating habits and health, these students will be more prepared to enter the workforce in emerging fields that provide living wage opportunities while enhancing quality of life for all.

Having first launched GBM's National Health, Wellness and Learning Center in an underutilized 100+ year-old library at C.S. 55 in Claremont Village, students who have participated in this program have experienced health improvements that lower the risk of childhood obesity, diabetes and heart disease while also increasing their performance in school.

If you are interested in attending the event, details are included below and interviews are available.

WHO: Stephen Ritz, Green Bronx Machine
Victor Pupo, Empire
Frank Degennaro, Principal, P.S. 721x

WHEN: Wednesday, February 13th at 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

WHERE: P.S. 721x; Room 319
2697 Westchester Ave.
Bronx, NY 10461

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Quotes Regarding the Ribbon-Cutting Event:

“Our students and faculty are so excited and so grateful to Empire and Green Bronx Machine for this classroom makeover that inspires healthy living, healthy learning, and creates 21st century career and college readiness.” ~ Frank Degennaro, Principal, P.S. 721x

“Beyond happy healthy students, this partnership proves that every classroom in America can have an affordable, portable, professional, mobile classroom teaching kitchen that is accessible for all.” ~ John Stephenson, Founder of Port-Equip/Stephenson Custom Case

“We’ re proud to partner with Empire and NYC DOE to create the first wheelchair accessible classroom farm and kitchen in America. Every child deserves a safe, healthy, nurturing environment and we’ re so proud – this is Bronx innovation at its best!” ~ Stephen Ritz, Founder, Green Bronx Machine

“Thanks to this partnership, we’ ve been able to develop the first fully accessible piece of hydroponic technology that will create opportunities for untold Americans and farmers around the world. Empire and Green Bronx Machine are growing something greater – for all!” ~ Chris Higgins, Founder & CEO, HortAmericas

“To see these future chefs and farmers smiling with glee as they cook and farm, three stories up in the middle of winter, makes me proud and excited to be a New York City public school teacher with District 75.” ~ Jeremy Kottkamp, Teacher, P.S. 721x