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PRESS RELEASE

**HHC Kings County Hospital Center Hosts Forum on
“Guns Down, Life Up” Anti-Violence Initiative
Resonating with Community Youth**

Brooklyn, NY – July 2, 2015. The Kings County Hospital Center (KCHC) Community Advisory Board (CAB) held its Annual Public Meeting on Saturday, June 27, focusing on Youth Anti-Violence Initiatives. More than 100 attendees, many of them adolescents from community youth programs, participated in the 3-hour long program that brought together a coalition of community partners sharing the common goal to mobilize change necessary to stop the cycle of gun and other violence, and to empower youth to make choices to live safe and healthier lives. The Forum was organized in collaboration with the “Guns Down, Life Up” (GDLU) program of the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), the Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI) at KCHC and other community partners.

Ernest Baptiste, Executive Director for Kings County Hospital Center said, “The communities served by KCHC are disproportionately impacted by gun and other violence, which, sadly, continues to leave a great toll on the lives of our young people, their families, and the community at large. I commend the KCHC CAB for bringing awareness to this critical issue, and for coalescing key community partners to educate and empower our youth on making safe choices to reach their full potential.”

NYC Councilman Mathieu Eugene, Chair of the City Council Youth Committee, was also in attendance and spoke passionately about his efforts to provide positive alternatives to community youth. “We must talk to our children and guide them because violence is a disease. I commend all of you who are at this meeting because you are taking action on the issue of violence so we can make a difference.” **Honorable Sharon Clarke**, a criminal court judge raised in East Flatbush, also attended the meeting.

The powerful message of “Guns Down, Life Up!” resonated with youth throughout the meeting who repeated the phrase and proudly donned bright t-shirts bearing this same message. Featured speakers included: **Kenneth Campbell**, Chair, KCHC Community Advisory Board; **Erik Cliette**, Senior Director of the HHC “Guns Down, Life Up” program; **Dr. Robert Gore**, Executive Director, Kings Against Violence Initiative; and **Dr. Eric Legome**, Chief, KCHC Emergency Department.

“Our CAB has a long history of advocacy for this community,” said **Kenneth Campbell**. “Our goal is to focus on developing positive skills, including physical, psychological, social, economic and spiritual so that we can provide guidance to our community youth and reduce the incidence of violence.”

Keynote Speaker, **Beloved Hammond**, featured in the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival’s critically acclaimed film, “Triggering Wounds,” which was shown at Saturday’s Forum, had a very profound dialogue with the youth about his own experience of being trapped in the cycle of violence. Beloved, himself a victim of gun violence that left him critically wounded culminating in an 8 year-long prison sentence, spoke eloquently about the journey he took to turn his own life around. Now an effective and highly sought after speaker, Beloved is a strong proponent for implementing effective violence intervention and prevention strategies that targets at risk young men and women. Beloved told the youth

in attendance, “A gun doesn’t bring respect. It brings fear, violence and {it} hurts families. If you have a friend, then you need to know how to save a life. The first life you save might be your own.” His somber and powerful message fell upon an intensely silent adolescent audience as they soaked in every word and clamored around him for more at the program’s end.

Dr. Robert Gore, founder of KAVI, was raised in Brooklyn and knows first-hand the issues of street violence, as well as experience through his work as an emergency room physician in the KCHC Level I Trauma Center, which in 2014 alone saw 212 gunshot cases and 162 stab wound cases. He told the audience, “Guns Down, Life Up! is a powerful message. It is a statement of empowerment and that’s our focus. We need to emphasize vitality and wellness, so guns can be down and life can be up!”

“HHC is the largest public health system in the country, so we are the leaders,” said **Erik Cliette**, GDLU Senior Director. “What we do here in New York City to stop violence will impact the entire country.” He urged the youth to spread the word about “Guns Down, Life Up!” by wearing their t-shirts and using social media.

The KCHC Community Advisory Board has been involved in community advocacy since 1970, addressing the health and mental health needs of the communities served by KCHC. For the past three years, the CAB has focused attention on the issues of violence in the community, working with HHC and Kings County Hospital to establish a viable prevention and intervention program, which is based at the Hospital. This partnership, called **KCHC LIVE!** (Let’s Interrupt Violence Everywhere), includes hospital responders from KAVI, Save Our Streets (S.O.S.) and Man Up/Real People Do Real Things. The responders work with hospitalized patients and families affected by violence to mediate conflicts and de-escalate further violence in the community. Plans are underway to expand the resources which are offered to community youth as alternatives.

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About Kings County Hospital Center

Kings County Hospital Center (KCHC) is a 627-bed facility that serves the communities of Central Brooklyn, East New York-New Lots and Flatbush. KCHC, a teaching hospital, is part of the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC). KCHC is a Level I Trauma Center for Adults and the only Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center in Brooklyn. It is a NYSDOH Designated AIDS Center; a Stroke Center; and has also been designated as a Center of Excellence for Diabetes and for Parkinson Disease. KCHC has played a major role in providing health care to vulnerable populations in Brooklyn since 1831. For more information visit www.nyc.gov/kchc

About HHC

The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) is a \$6.7 billion integrated healthcare delivery system and is the largest municipal healthcare organization in the country. HHC provides a wide range of high quality and affordable healthcare services to 1.4 million New Yorkers every year and more than 475,000 are uninsured. HHC offers medical, mental health and substance abuse services, as well as specialized care for a wide range of health conditions through its 11 Centers of Excellence. Comprehensive, personalized care is available to all New Yorkers at HHC’s 11 acute care hospitals, five skilled nursing facilities, six large diagnostic and treatment centers and more than 70 community based clinics. HHC Health and Home Care also provides in-home services for New Yorkers. HHC’s own MetroPlus Health Plan is one of the New York area’s largest providers of government-sponsored health insurance and is the plan of choice for nearly half a million New Yorkers. HHC was the 2008 recipient of the National Quality Forum and The Joint Commission’s John M. Eisenberg Award for Innovation in Patient Safety and Quality. Several HHC facilities have been recognized nationally for clinical excellence and commitment to quality achievements. For more information, visit: www.nyc.gov/hhc or find us on [facebook.com/nycHHC](https://www.facebook.com/nycHHC) or twitter.com/HHCnyc.