

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES HONORS COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS  
IN SHELTER WITH RECOGNITION CEREMONY ABOARD THE INTREPID MUSEUM**

*First Lady of New York City and Deputy Mayor will join DHS at the first ceremony of its kind  
to honor the 45 college-bound students and seven college graduates living in shelters*

*All graduates will receive free laptops donated by DHS*

**JUNE 26, 2015** – Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Gilbert Taylor, First Lady of New York City Chirlane McCray, and Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services Lilliam Barrios-Paoli will tonight celebrate 45 college-bound high school students and seven St. John’s University graduates living in DHS shelters in the first ceremony of its kind at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum.

In the Great Hall of the Intrepid Museum, the recent high school and college graduates will enjoy a catered dinner and a certificate ceremony with remarks from City officials, the First Lady of New York City, and two of their peers. All the students will receive gifts of laptop computers, awarded to them through donations to the DHS Homeless Trust Fund.

“Tonight’s event is very special as we recognize and honor the achievements of students living in DHS shelters,” said **DHS Commissioner Gilbert Taylor**. “These impressive young people have shown great dedication to their education and have accomplished much despite obstacles they may have encountered. For that, we commend them, and believe that these successes are among the many more still to come in the lives of these promising individuals.”

DHS is committed to ensuring the educational attainment and continuity of all children who are living in shelters. DHS works closely with the Department of Education to support students’ educational experience and needs both within and outside of the classroom.

Of the high school graduates in attendance, approximately 32-percent had perfect attendance and 44-percent had 90-percent or above attendance records. This fall the students will continue their studies by attending colleges including Fordham University; Syracuse University; New York University; Spelman College; Pratt Institute; State University of New York campuses; and City University of New York campuses such as Hunter, Brooklyn, and John Jay; among others.

“These are very special young people. In their relatively short time on earth, they have overcome more obstacles than many people will encounter in a lifetime,” said **First Lady of New York City Chirlane McCray**. “So on behalf of the entire city, I want to thank them for inspiring us. What they have achieved is proof that anything is possible if you work hard and have faith—and we know, they are just getting started.”

“We are thrilled to congratulate these graduates on their remarkable accomplishments,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services Lilliam Barrios-Paoli**. “The de Blasio Administration, DHS,

under the leadership of Commissioner Taylor, and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña are deeply committed to ensuring that all of the children in our shelters receive a quality education and the opportunity to attend college.”

“I congratulate these graduates on their perseverance and tremendous achievement,” said **Department of Education Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. These young men and women have overcome obstacles to get a high-quality education, opening up their minds and opening the door to opportunities and a better life. They are the future of our City, and I look forward to seeing all the amazing things they accomplish in college, their careers, and their adult lives.”

"Our long-term relationship with DHS has been, and continues to be, a valuable and valued partnership," said **Lynda Kennedy, Vice President of Education at the Intrepid Museum**. "We are honored to be able to celebrate the achievements of these incredible students with them and their families."

The recent college graduates completed their associate's degrees at St. John's University through the Advantage Academy partnership between the university and DHS. The program was established in 2009 and provides eligible students have the opportunity to obtain an Associate's Degree in Business Administration from the College of Professional Studies at no personal cost. A total of 41 students have graduated since the program's inception.

Since 2004, DHS has partnered with the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, which has welcomed more than 2,000 families and veterans from over 40 City shelters onto its decks for a multitude of educational events. The museum annually closes the vessel to the public and provides an extraordinary Thanksgiving celebration for shelter residents.

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