

Good evening, everyone. It's great to be with you on this special day. Let me begin by thanking the Southern Queens Park Association and their President and Executive Director Roger Scotland for graciously hosting the final session of the second NFL-NYCHA Football Officiating Academy; as well as the members of the Springfield Rifles Youth Football League for joining us for tonight's scrimmage.

I can't tell you how proud I am of each of you, and how excited I am to expand and strengthen NYCHA's partnership with our friends at the NFL. As the National Football League says, "Football and community are the twin pillars of the NFL." That's why NYCHA is so proud to partner with them, because we understand that building strong communities begins with our youth and young adults, and it begins with investing your dreams. It is our hope that this program will not only be a gateway to an

officiating career, but that it will also be a gateway to living your lives with passion, courage and determination—wherever your dreams and your hard work lead.

Football requires a lot from us; but its gifts are even greater. I got my start in sports playing football for the East Side Raiders with my local Police Athletic League in Detroit; and from that foundation I went on to play in high school and in college.

Of the many lessons I learned from my mentors on the force, the one that remains most strongly with me isn't about throwing touchdowns or making tackles, but rather that life is best lived when you dedicate yourself to improving the lives of others. That service is how you win on the field and off.

That's a lesson that's exemplified in the community service the NFL does all across the world; and it's lived every day by men and women like Carl Johnson, Wayne Mackie, Terrell Canton and Vanessa Streater. To each of you—thank you for standing with NYCHA and helping us support the future of New York City. And I want to say a special 'thank you' to Head Linesman Wayne

Mackie who, as a former resident of Linden Houses, is one of NYCHA's own.

I also want to thank NYCHA's outstanding team. Without your tireless commitment, this truly special program would not have been possible. To our Deputy General Manager for Community Programs and Development Sharon Myrie; Director of the Office of Public-Private Partnerships, Dawn Walker; Assistant Deputy General Manager for Community Operations Deidra Gilliard; the Manager of NYCHA's Education Through Sports Unit, Curtis Williams; and to all the men and women of Community Programs and Development who continue to help make this partnership such a success—thank you all very much.

Next week, we will come together again to congratulate each of you on an exceptional summer. A summer spent learning, expanding your horizons, and investing in your dreams and in your future. For all you have already accomplished—
Congratulations. And for all you will accomplish—my sincere best wishes. NYCHA, the NFL, your families, and your communities—

we're all cheering you on and we're excited for all the good we know you will do.