

# JH Launches Pilot Program Combining Physical Education With Character Education

## The St. Marks School Dreams It, Lives It, and Teaches It

### DREAMING IT



When St. Marks Evangelist School in East Harlem, NY, realized it did not have the necessary funds for a physical education program this school year, it could only dream of a way to make it happen. Their dream was a call to action for Jeremy's Heroes. We are thrilled to announce, thanks to a grant from

the Rowe Foundation, that we have awarded St. Mark's a physical education program, complete with equipment and an energetic instructor, for the entire student body! Additionally, the kids will be participating in the Jeremy's Heroes' character development program that includes developing and performing community service activities.

Established in 1912, St. Marks is the first African American Catholic grade school. A high percentage of the students attend on scholarship, and a shortage of funds was threatening the elimination of the physical education program. This was a devastating prospect to school leaders since their students live in an area that presents high rates of both asthma and obesity.

With our funding, the entire student body is participating in a physical education program run by a wonderful organization called Kids in the Game (KinG). Their physical education program is taught by Mr. Amadu Kabia, a Syracuse University graduate working on his Master's Degree in exercise science and rehabilitation. Jeremy's Heroes and KinG have developed a program that teaches students about exercise, nutrition and sports. Additionally, the children are taught character development through their gym class in a curriculum that includes: developing self-esteem, teamwork and sportsmanship. Jeremy's Heroes has developed a unique community service curriculum which is led in school by our Executive Director, Jennifer Glick.

### LIVING IT



All grades are attending physical education class once a week in their newly padded and fully equipped gymnasium. Mr. Kabia has introduced the entire student body to the game of soccer this fall. Many of the students, especially

the girls, never played soccer before this program. Their smiling faces, and anticipation for gym class, are proof that the children are enjoying exposure to this new experience.

In addition to his teaching skills, Mr. Kabia has organized the students' recess time with different activities emphasizing physical fitness. Recess is now an orderly activity where the children can release some steam before hitting the books in the afternoon.

Jennifer Glick introduced the character curriculum to the students by visiting every classroom and forging the partnership between Jeremy's Heroes and St. Marks.

Jennifer spoke about her brother, Jeremy, the importance of sports and physical fitness, and the importance of compassion and involvement in the community during her initial visits. Jennifer is an active and welcome part of St. Marks. Every month, she explores with the children the meaning of concepts they learn in gym class such as teamwork, leadership, and compassion. The first lesson was exploring the different definitions of community. The students defined their community as all children throughout the world"- what an amazing concept!

To encourage the children to follow "Jeremy's lead", Jennifer is leading the new "St. Mark's Service Crew" which meets once a month along with teacher, Rachel Vessey. They are developing monthly community service projects for the entire school population to participate in. With ideas which span from "Toasty Toes" slipper drives for the children of Harlem Hospital, to sending soccer balls to a shantytown in India, the children are enthusiastically reinforcing their definition of "community" service.

Additionally, the students in each classroom are creating their own school service project. The fourth-graders were so inspired by Jeremy's Heroes that they have begun painting a mural on the wall outside their classroom.

### TEACHING IT



On November 8th, the St. Marks community eagerly begins their first school wide service project, "Penny Wars - Send Basketballs to Africa". Each classroom has an empty gallon container where the stu-

dents may put their spare change for the next three weeks. The classroom which raises the most money will be awarded a Jeremy's Heroes pizza party.

You may be asking yourselves why basketballs to Africa? In their meetings with Jennifer Glick, the children were asked to decide how to spend the money they raise during Penny Wars. The children with their newfound love of sports, decided to bring sports to kids who have none. St. Marks' teacher, Ms. Vessey, has a brother who is in the Peace Corp. working with a small village in Chad, Africa. She brought in pictures of the children in the village. The St. Marks students decided that these children needed basketball equipment.

The Peace Corps. has arranged for a phone call from Chad to St. Marks on November 18th. The students will have an opportunity to tell the children of Chad why they are sending them basketball equipment. They will be teaching children halfway across the world, the values they are learning from Jeremy's Heroes.

Jeremy's Heroes is excited to have the opportunity to work with St. Marks and Kids in the Game. It is an opportunity to watch an entire school community discover their "hero within." This pilot program is just the beginning. Watch for the Jeremy's Heroes curriculum to impact schools across the nation. *jh*

