

# MS 226 SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

The Virgil I. Grissom School

## COMMUNITY RECOGNITION BANQUET



It is not often that parents and community-based organizations are celebrated for their contributions to the success of students in the school community but on Thursday, June 19, 2014, Middle School 226, The Virgil I. Grissom School, South Ozone Park, did just that by hosting an Award Recognition Banquet to thank these individuals for the support they provided during the school year.

"It takes all constituents to truly make a difference in a child's life. At Virgil I. Grissom, we pride ourselves on reaching for the stars. We instill in our students the value of hard work and dedication. We hold students to high expectations because we know that they all have the potential to move mountains," said Rushell White, the school's principal.

Joining those being recognized were Alvin Ailey Arts in the Community Liaison Iymaani Aytes, CITE Director Carl Sanfilippo, COO The Door Restaurant Chris and Joan Roberts, Councilmember Ruben Wills, CSA Representative Dorothy Morris, Deputy Network Leader Brenda Perez of CFN 210, David Lerner and Associates Michael Frank, Deputy Director of Facilities Mark DeVincenzo, Detective Solomon Chinnery, Distinguished Guests of the MS 226 School Community, Educational Alchemy LLC Quincy Koffel, GrowNYC Representative Thaddeus Copeland, MS 226 PTA President and Executive Board Members, Noel Pointer Liaison Ben Harney, Commanding Officer Wilbur Jones, OYIN, VP/COO/Director of Programming and Education, Mr. and Mrs. Dessisso, Parents of MS 226 Students Earning Perfect Attendance and Honor Roll for the Year, Rush Philanthropic Artist David Camacho, School Safety Supervisor Morgan, World Renowned Photographer Jeffrey Gamble, Youth Officer Paese of the 106th Precinct and NYPD Deputy Inspector Jeffrey Schiff. Event planner, Lady Tee, sponsored the night's decorations and several students officiated the celebratory program.

Several parents expressed their gratitude for the work being done in the school and the efforts of the administrators and teachers. "I am so glad that I chose this school for my children," one parent said.

The school, located at 121-10 Rockaway Blvd in South Ozone Park, serves over 1,200 students in grades 6 through 8. It boasts over fifteen clubs and teams which provide extracurricular activities offering a safe haven for students after school. Dubbed one of New York City's most persistently dangerous schools four years ago, the school has been working with community based organizations such as the RUSH Philanthropic Foundation and the Alvin Ailey Arts in the Community Program to provide positive academic and social experiences for its students.

This school year, MS 226 moved from a developing to a proficient rating on its Quality Review, a two- or three-day school visit by experienced educators to evaluate how well a school is organized to support student achievement.



PHOTOS COURTESY MS 226



## 94 STUDENTS PUBLISH POETRY

Poet, author Renée McRae facilitated a workshop series with Classes 601, 701 and 704 at MS 226, the culmination of which resulted in students becoming published poets. The program, "Step/Write Into Your Greatness," is a 10-session poetry-writing series which focuses on self-esteem, self-confidence, communication skills and career-path choices. A mainstay of the program encourages critical thinking skills as students examine and discuss leadership quotes at the beginning of each session.

Students expressed their feelings through heartfelt and funny limericks, odes, ballads and metaphors, which reflected much about their ambitions, fears, beliefs and habits. "It's like a mini self-development course but through poetic expression" says Ms. Renée, founder and president of Poetic Motivations, LLC.

In speaking of the program, 704 Teacher Ms. Hunter said, "Each week my students eagerly anticipated their motivational poetry sessions and were able to encourage and motivate themselves as well as their peers through the forum of literary expression."

The book signing which was coordinated by the school librarian, Ms. Small, was held on June 19th. Excited students met one last time with Ms. Renée, and each student received a copy of their published book, "To Touch a Star." The new authors recited their favorite poems in front of a proud audience of peers, parents, teachers and Principal Ms. Rushell White, and the event culminated with the students signing each other's books.

Ms. Bleiweiss, who also contributed a poem in the book, commented, "Ms. Renée was great. She really connected with the students and they really enjoyed the class."

Quentin Price, of Ms. Carballo's Class 601, says it all... "I didn't have any clue what I was going to do with my life. It's Ms. Renee's determination and passion that have opened my eyes to realize that I want to help people feel good about themselves emotionally and mentally. Her program has really changed my life forever, and I will never forget this once-in-a-lifetime experience."



PHOTOS BY JUDI BELLE RAINES



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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE FEATURED ON OUR SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT PAGE, CALL LISA LICHAUSI, EDUCATION COORDINATOR, AT (718) 205-8000, EXT. 110.