



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Peekskill Youth Mentoring Program Preventing Violence, Fostering Career Goals Funded with \$50K from Harckham

PETE HARCKHAM November 16, 2023

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State Sen. Pete Harckham along with local officials and graduates of the mentoring program in Peekskill

State Senator and city leaders celebrate mentoring graduates at special dinner

*Peekskill, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham was a special guest at a recent dinner prepared and served by the youths graduating from violence prevention and mentoring program that was funded by a \$50K grant he secured late last year. The funding supported a 12-week course in food handling with the City of Peekskill's Senior Nutrition Department

Manager for 10 high school and four post-secondary students.

“More than ever, we have to help provide many of our young residents with beneficial opportunities to create paths forward in life and foster career goals while also trying to eliminate violent crime in our communities,” said Harckham. “I am truly impressed with this innovative partnership between the City of Peekskill and Lead By Example to establish this worthwhile mentoring program, and congratulate the program’s new graduates. The meal was great, too! I am proud to have been able to help fund this initiative and hope it continues to grow. Thank you to Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins for approving this grant and prioritizing violence prevention in our communities.”

During the past three months, the 14 students joined a pilot program for youth-at-risk and were taught how to work in a culinary operation. They learned food handling, preparation and service skills. During this time, guest speakers discussed their culinary careers as well as how they overcame life challenges and made careers for themselves.

As part of the program, Peekskill city hired Lead by Example, a mentoring program from New York City, whose credible mentors met with the youths and shared experiences about overcoming great challenges in their own lives. The mentors helped the students discuss their own challenges and obstacles to obtaining their goals. The purpose of this program was to become aware of how students might start to focus on a path to success after high school and avoid harming others and themselves with poor choices.

Peekskill used funding from Harckham to develop a model where youth can be trained and receive mentoring at the same time. It is hoped that this type of training/mentoring program will be replicated with other types of career training.

The dinner, which included an appetizer, Caesar salad, two entrées and dessert, along with a children's menu, was held at the Peekskill Senior Nutrition Center, and attendees included a number of elected officials and invited guests. All of the mentoring program's young participants worked on the meal under the supervision of Peekskill's Senior Nutrition Department Manager Johnathan Zamora and received a New York State Senate Certificate of Recognition from Harckham.

Matthew C. Alexander, Peekskill's city manager, said, "This first pilot certificate program in food preparation, with mentoring guidance from Lead by Example, combined job readiness training with mentoring to provide youth with a powerful way to navigate life choices. While learning job skills, participating youth, near the end of having just completed high school, were also challenged to develop goals and strategies for achieving them. Thanks to funding from Senator Harckham, the City was able to develop a program template, and to see the graduating youth achieve such important goals was quite remarkable. The City of Peekskill will be looking for ways to repeat this type of programming to give more youth an opportunity to develop their goals while transitioning from high school to the world of employment and self-sufficiency."

Daniel Egipiciaco, president of Lead By Example, said, "The main thing Lead By Example brings to the youths we work with from underserved communities is a sense of authenticity and relatability. We put a face to the emotions that these young people are going through in real-time and let them know we understand their trials and tribulations. Truly, a smart person learns from his or her mistakes, but a wise person learns from the mistakes of others. Working together with everyone in Peekskill truly benefited the young people in the program, and I look forward to future collaborations to keep fostering positive changes in this community."