



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DREAM Launches Alumni Council

The new leadership board will center the alumni voice in DREAM's strategic decisions and work to engage the organization's alumni network, which spans three decades.

New York, NY — DREAM, a 31-year public charter school network and youth development organization that operates in East Harlem and the South Bronx, announced the launch of its first Alumni Council, an organizational leadership body that will work to advance DREAM's mission and engage its ever-growing alumni community.

Comprised of 20 members, the Alumni Council was created to represent those who have participated in a wide range of DREAM's offerings during the organization's three-decade history—including its Harlem RBI teams and summer and afterschool programs—as well as graduates of DREAM Charter Schools.

"DREAM has evolved so much since its foundation as Harlem RBI back in 1991," said DREAM co-Chief Executive Officer Richard Berlin. "Establishing an alumni board at this juncture threads together all the experiences of our past participants and students, and creates a united voice that will play a strong role in DREAM's future."

"I'm so excited that we are building a formal space for our alumni to support the organization," said co-Chief Executive Officer Eve Colavito. "Their experience, mentorship, and connection to DREAM mean so much to our current students, and increasing the ways in which alumni can play a role will only strengthen our impact."

As DREAM moves into the next generation of its work, the organization plans to triple the number of children it serves annually, while graduating approximately 100 students into its alumni population each year. The creation of the Alumni Council will help ensure both current and future alumni feel connected to the organization as it continues this growth. The formation of the Council also helps to advance DREAM's DEI values—establishing homegrown talent and leadership pipelines, and ensuring an increased emphasis on alumni voice in the organization's strategic decisions.

Jaylen Amaker, a student at Notre Dame Law School, and Maria Gerena, Community Programs Manager at Asphalt Green in New York City, have been chosen as the Council's inaugural co-chairs. The pair will also have the opportunity to participate as Alumni Council representatives on DREAM's Board of Directors.

"I consider myself a pioneer of the organization, and I can't wait to get started establishing the Alumni Council," said Gerena, who is not only part of DREAM's 2004 cohort, but also a former staff member who has served in multiple positions with the organization, including youth worker, coach, and baseball/softball coordinator. "I'm truly a person that likes to create something of substance, that can keep running on its own. It will be great to jumpstart the Council, put our imprint on it, and lay out a strong foundation."

"I want to be that bridge between the earlier organization and the current structure," said Amaker, a member of the 2011 cohort who also serves on the organization's DREAM Ambassadors associates board. "It's important for current students to get to know alumni who have gone through what they're going through. And I want alumni to know that their journey with DREAM hasn't ended—they can pay it forward. Whatever their path is, they can continue to help our community."

The Alumni Council's mandate will include providing support for current and future alumni (also known as DREAM Legends), while creating awareness for DREAM among its expanding network and advocating for the alumni voice within the organization. Council members will also serve on one of three subcommittees, which focus on alumni engagement, mentorship and volunteerism, and communications and partnerships.

Since 1991, DREAM has evolved from a volunteer little league into a network of public charter schools serving more than 2,000 children in East Harlem and the South Bronx. Over the course of three decades, the organization has launched its award-winning summer programming, including REAL Kids, DREAM University, and Rookies; founded six extended-day, extended-year public charter schools with free afterschool programming for all students; graduated its first 12th grade class from DREAM Charter High School; and created a six-year post-secondary support program to assist DREAM alumni to and through college, among many other initiatives.

DREAM's Inaugural Alumni Council

David Cruz, Class of 1998

Jason Medina, Class of 2001

Maria Gerena, Class of 2004

Rashad Johnson, Class of 2006

Milagros (Millie) Ortega, Class of 2006

Justina Sharrock-Brown, Class of 2006

Amanda Yopez, Class of 2008

Jason Perez, Class of 2010
Jaylen Amaker, Class of 2011
Natalia Yulfo, Class of 2011
Kelly Hernandez, Class of 2012
Patricia Vazquez, Class of 2012
Anitsugeiry Guadalupe, Class of 2013
Amanda Irizarry, Class of 2013
Brandi McGrier, Class of 2014
Essence Torres, Class of 2014
Louise Phillips, Class of 2015
Jaret Perez, Class of 2016
Dominick Torres, Class of 2016
Abigail Castillo, Class of 2017

ABOUT DREAM

Originally founded as Harlem RBI, DREAM traces its beginnings to 1991, when a group of volunteers transformed an abandoned, garbage-strewn lot into two baseball diamonds for the youth of East Harlem. Thirty years later, the organization serves thousands of children across East Harlem and the South Bronx through a network of free, extended-day, extended-year DREAM Charter Schools and community sports-based youth development programs. By developing a whole child model that is responsive to the unique academic and social needs of every child, DREAM is creating a future where all children are equipped to fulfill their vision of success.

For more information on DREAM and its mission, visit www.wearedream.org.

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