



First Lady Inspires at Mentoring Summit

Wednesday, January 26, 2011 - Major mentoring organizations and corporate leaders came together during yesterday's National Mentoring Summit in Washington, D.C., to collaborate on supporting youth through mentoring.

In her remarks at the Summit, First Lady Michelle Obama talked about the importance of mentoring and was immediately followed by a panel discussion with several Cabinet members, who shared their own mentoring experiences.

MENTOR, along with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the Harvard School of Public Health and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention hosted this first National Mentoring Summit at the U.S. Library of Congress.

The First Lady spoke to a room of nearly 500 mentoring advocates, including mentor-mentee pairs and corporate executives. "Having a mentor is more important than ever before. And that's because, in many ways, being a kid today is tougher than ever before. And then when you add in the age-old struggles of just plain old growing up – the anxiety, the confusion, the academic and the social pressure – you've got an entire generation of young people truly in desperate need of a friend, someone they can trust, an example they can follow. And that's where all of you come in," she said.

Following the First Lady's address, an engaging panel discussion ensued with the U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, Jr., the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, the U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service Patrick Corvington and Chief of Staff of the White House Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs Mike Strautmanis, moderated by Special Assistant to President Obama and Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Joshua DuBois.

"We were overwhelmed by the support of mentoring from the First Lady and many members of the President's Cabinet, along with members of Congress like Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and Representative Kay Granger (R-TX). It is clear that mentoring America's youth is on the top of the nation's agenda and is an issue that crosses party lines," stated Larry M. Wright, Ph.D., president and CEO of MENTOR.

Also during the Summit, Chancellor J. Keith Motley announced that the University of Massachusetts Boston will partner with MENTOR to form the UMass Boston/Mentor Research Alliance, a first-of-its-kind institute that will support the advancement of youth mentoring efforts.

In addition, Richard Pittelli, vice president of Finance for Bloomingdale's, accepted the National Mentoring Summit's Mentor of the Year award for mentoring three children since 1999, when Bloomingdale's and Mentoring USA launched a mentoring program at P.S. 59 in New York City.

MENTOR's Board Chairman Willem Kooyker was the Summit Chair. Founding Partners for the Summit were America's Promise Alliance, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, City Year, College Success Foundation, Communities In Schools, Dare Mighty Things, Inc, Mentoring USA, National Alliance of Faith and Justice, National Dropout Prevention Center, National Collaboration for Youth, National CARES Mentoring Movement, Points of Light Institute and United Way Worldwide.