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HARTER SECREST & EMERY ATTORNEYS TEAM WITH ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOLS TO HELP STUDENTS MAKE MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL
Approximately 500 students participate in 6th annual Jewelry Shop program

Rochester, N.Y., May 11, 2017 – Hundreds of local school children are prepared to make this Mother's Day extra special, thanks to a community-wide program that is making a dazzling impression with students, their families and teachers.

For the sixth consecutive year, a team of community volunteers, led by attorneys at Harter Secrest & Emery LLP (HSE), a full-service business law firm with operations throughout New York, once again partnered with the Rochester City School District to conduct the special Mother's Day Jewelry Shop program in two local schools.

Nearly 500 students in grades K-6 at Schools 29 and 41 took part in the program, which rewards students who achieve attendance and behavior goals by inviting them to a special shop event, where they can select Mother's Day gifts from among hundreds of pieces of donated costume jewelry. The event was co-chaired by Harter Secrest & Emery attorneys Erika N.D. Stanat and Jodi Reynolds, and Kate Cummins, a former associate at Harter Secrest & Emery and current owner of Invenio Recruiting.

The program aims to address issues of financial need and encourage school attendance and good behavior on the part of Rochester City School District students. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (SAIPE), the youth poverty rate in Rochester is 45.8 percent, with 15,570 children living in poverty. That rate was the second highest among school districts across the country.

"You see the children's faces light up with joy and excitement when they have earned their way into the shop to pick out a gift for that special woman in their life," Stanat said. "By using the incentive of the shop, the schools are helping these students be more present, active and attentive learners. The habits encouraged through this program can, over the course the students' lives, help them achieve more academically and personally."

In order to earn the opportunity to attend the shops set up at each school, students must have a 95 percent attendance rate, must maintain a record of good behavior, and must have earned a certain number of points based on the incentive-based, long-term programs at their school.

“Student success begins with attending school every day” said Barbara Deane-Williams, Superintendent for the Rochester City School District. “Recognizing children with good attendance and great effort in school is an excellent way to reinforce those positive behaviors. The District is appreciative of the generous support from Harter Secrest & Emery, Mann’s Jewelers, and the many community partners who have allowed our students to choose such thoughtful Mother’s Day gifts for the past six years.”

The program is supported by the tireless work of a team of volunteers, a giving community spirit, and the generous partnership of Mann’s Jewelers. In support of the program, volunteers collect, clean, sort, and bag donations of gently-used costume jewelry for the shops. Mann’s assists with the collection efforts as well, accepting donations in their stores, while also cleaning, sorting and bagging donated items, providing replacement watch batteries and small jewelry repairs, as well as providing neck and wrist forms to display items at the shops as they would appear in a retail store.

“The generosity shown to this program is astonishing,” said Reynolds. “It is a year-round, full team effort that makes today possible. Thousands of pieces of jewelry have been cleaned and sorted in just the past few weeks leading up to today, and we have a total inventory of more than 5,000 pieces to date.”

In addition to the Jewelry Shop, this year’s program also has an essay contest for 5th and 6th grade students at School 29. Students were asked to write about who inspires them in their own educational journey. Reviewers will select one fifth and one sixth grade essay and award those students \$50 Visa gift cards along with copies of a special book. Each of the top essay writers will also win a classroom pizza party for his or her class.

“This program has the possibility to make some measure of an impact in the lives of the students, beyond just the day of the shop,” added Cummins. “The work the students put in to earn their way into the shop and through the essay contest - that’s the reward for us as volunteers. We are, in a small way, doing our best to make a difference.”

Now in its sixth year in Rochester, the Mother’s Day Jewelry Shop program has been a remarkable success. From 2012 – 2014, the program was run in one school. In 2015, the program was expanded with program volunteers staffing the shop and supplying jewelry to students at School 41 and supplying jewelry to School 17 to enable it to run its own program. In 2016, the program expanded to three schools and included an essay contest. In its first six years, the program has enabled qualifying students to select more than 3,000 Mother’s Day gifts for their mothers or female care-givers.

About Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

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