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P.S. 279 Parents Take Part In Journey Of Self-Improvement By Skye Holly

Being a parent is not only a demanding job, it can also be a challenging one that leaves individuals feeling exhausted or depleted emotionally in more ways than one. At the same time, some parents might feel guilty for wanting personal satisfaction apart from their roles as caregivers.

Principal Lorenzo Chambers and Parent Coordinator Tamika Rawleigh recognized those needs in some of the parents of students at the East 104th Street elementary school.

"Identifying that when I don't nurture myself, I can't be as constructive and productive as I'd like to be," Rawleigh noted, which made her and the principal want to help them, so they enlisted the support of Canarsie merchants in a program called "The Parenting Journey."

A graduation ceremony took place last week for participants in the program, a 12-week workshop organized by the Brooklyn AIDS Task Force. Held at P.S. 279, it focused on nurturing the parent and addressing issues of how their past experiences influence the day-to-day decisions in raising their children.

"The Parenting Journey" gave parents a chance to share their experiences with one another and learn from a curriculum created by Tanisha Durden, senior health

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educator with the Task Force that promoted good parenting skills through making connections between what they did now and how they themselves grew up. Better behaviors were encouraged, as were techniques for goal setting and daily nurturing, even if it is just a few minutes alone.

Because so many parents can fail to take care of themselves because they think to put their children first, "The Parenting Journey" emphasized that only by becoming better people first could they become better parents.

Parent Corina McCallum said the program allowed her to "fit me into my schedule."

Others shared that "The Parenting Journey" challenged them to set financial and communication goals and activities that would nurture their personal lives.

At the completion of the program, Durden handed one parent a certificate and encouraging her, "Continue to nurture yourself — no exceptions!"

When the school announced the workshop was open to the community, several area businesses responded in support. For the graduation ceremony, State Senator John Sampson supplied gift certificates from a local spa to the graduates and several area businesses provided food for their reception.

Not only were the graduates of "The Parenting Journey" able to recognize that they should nurture themselves, but they got a chance to feel nurtured and pampered by the community, too.

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