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Friends of the Children NY Gets \$1.5 Million Pinkerton Grant



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Friends of the Children NY, a 12-year old non-profit based in Harlem, has been awarded a five-year, \$1.5-million grant from the Pinkerton Foundation. The funding will bolster Friends NY's Harlem operation and speed the replication of its successful model in the South Bronx, starting this September. The Pinkerton grant triggered the \$100K challenge portion of a \$250K grant from The Price Family Foundation which will go to the Bronx program.

"We are excited to see this great program grow," said Pinkerton Senior Program Officer Laurie Dien. "We've been with them from the start, and they have demonstrated the power of their mission—changing the destiny of NYC's most vulnerable children . . . one child at a time."

Joanne Duhl, Executive Director of the Price Family Foundation, joined Dien in praising the results Friends NY achieves. Each child, called an Achiever, must graduate high school with a plan for the future and avoid the criminal justice system and teen pregnancy. The group continually monitors its results; its research has been aided and supported by a Harvard Business School alumni group and by a randomized longitudinal control study initiated with funding from the National Institutes of Health.

"We are so pleased to have earned the continued support of The Pinkerton Foundation," said Robert L. Houck, Executive Director of Friends NY. "They have been faithful partners since 2001, providing capital funds to build our expanded Friends Place in Harlem, critical annual operational funding—and valuable counseling."

Friends NY takes an innovative approach to early-intervention, mentoring and the definition of at-risk children. It brings children into the program at kindergarten, and, said Houck, intervenes to support them "early, often and always." The program goes year-round, 24/7, and won't let go until every child has graduated high school.

This fall, Friends NY will enter public schools in the South Bronx and, working with teachers and with its own extensive list of indicators, will choose 20 children with the bleakest prospects for success. These are children who, at age 5, have significant behavior and learning issues and whose families may have already experienced problems such as incarceration, abuse, drug use or homelessness.

Each Achiever is paired with a full-time, salaried youth advocate, called a "Friend"— often a former teacher or social worker—and backed by an in-house social work and education department, as well as numerous partner agencies. The Friends not only take children on carefully designed outings, but also spend hours in their classrooms, guide them in obtaining healthcare and social services, and help them navigate family crises.

The organization is now celebrating a major milestone: the high school graduations and college acceptances of the first cohort of Achievers, who entered the program at ages five and six in 2001.

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