



Families On The Move of NYC, Inc.

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For Immediate Release

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Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow... Families On The Move: Advocates For Families Of Children And Youth With Emotional, Behavioral, or Mental Illness Challenges

New York, NY-- Families On The Move a non-profit family run organization dedicated to providing support, education and advocacy for families and caregivers of children and youth who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges opened its office this year. FOTM is the first family run, family driven organization to emerge out of the system of care in NYC.

Families On The Move is comprised of an eleven member Board of Directors and an energetic staff that is ready to serve the diverse needs of families in the communities of NYC.

On October 15, 2005 at the 15th Annual Family Support Conference at the Petridis School on Staten Island, Families On The Move was inaugurated into the NYC system of care. The event was kicked off by the sensational and vibrant Brooklyn Steppers Marching Band. A 120 piece southern style band consisting of youth grades 5-12. As the vibrations from the band reverberated down the aisle the families were on their feet in joy and praise. The Young Gifted and Talented of PS 18 on Staten Island [J. Greenleaf Whittier School] dazzled the over 650 individuals in attendance with their artistic creativity. "This was a one of a kind event because it exceeded the scope and scale of your average conference; it was a family fun day that was able to accommodate the whole family; youth, children, parents and childcare providers. There were a number of fun activities and workshops for the youth as well as the adults in attendance designed to educate and motivate." added V.P. of the Board of Directors Akmeer Kahiem.

Kahiem also provided a personal testimony of the challenges and struggles he and his brothers triumphed over at an early age. The individuals in attendance were able to relate to someone who also persevered through emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges and was able to rise above those challenges to achieve success.

The kickoff was not only about family fun but providing education and motivation. The keynote address was presented by a highly sought after lecturer and consultant Karl Dennis, Executive Director of Kaleidoscope Inc. of Chicago. Mr. Dennis is an advocate of unconditional care and the originator of intensive In-Home Family Preservation. He is also one of the pioneers of the *Wraparound Approach* to providing youth and family services. In his address Karl Dennis stated, "Helping others isn't just good for the ones who are helped; it's good for the helpers, too. About our approach to our work: we're no different from the people we're serving. The only difference between them and us is luck."

A number the most influential mental health organizations in the city and state [NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene; NY State Office of Mental Health] and high ranking leaders of those organizations were present at the event. Everyone in attendance was anxiously preparing to usher in a new era in the NYC system of care. The excitement for this new era was evident by the number of families, youth and providers that enjoyed the event. Bernadine Meeks President of the Board of Directors noted, "the reported 668 individuals that were in attendance far exceeded the expectations of the planners of the event. An unknown source said, "fun was had by all".

A special thanks must be extended to the Staten Island Parent Resource Center and the Petridis School for the hosting the launch of a groundbreaking organization that is family run and family driven.

For additional information about FOTM please contact our office staff Luz Marcial [Administrative Assistant] 212-837-7904 or Euphemia Strauchn FDC, MSW [Executive Director] 212-837-7905.