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ESPN Pro Football Analyst Sends Message of Perseverance To Youth During 20th Anniversary Governor's Prevention Partnership Luncheon

*U.S. Congressman Chris Murphy Honors Companies for Contribution to Youth Prevention
Connecticut Youths Deliver Heartfelt Messages About Challenges/Successes*

NEW BRITAIN, CONN. – ESPN Pro Football Analyst Marcellus Wiley passed the ball to youth, encouraging them to persevere and to chase their dreams during the 20th Annual Governor's Prevention Partnership Luncheon. Before a crowd of nearly 200 business leaders, state officials, educators, and youth, Wiley spoke about breaking through traditional barriers to find personal success and gratification.

The annual event recognizes companies that have stepped up to build a strong, healthy future workforce through leadership in mentoring and in creating a strong learning environment including, prevention of violence, alcohol, and drug use. In her message congratulating business partners and encouraging their continued support, Governor M. Jodi Rell stressed, "We know that for every child lost to drugs, violence, underage drinking, bullying or the absence of a caring role model, the pipeline supporting our economic prosperity narrows. That is something Connecticut simply cannot afford."

U.S. Congressman Chris Murphy helped present the annual "Partners in Prevention Awards" to People's United Bank and Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield for their leadership, innovation and outstanding contributions to prevention programs that benefit youth.

"Today's annual luncheon is a testament to the strong and vibrant public-private partnership that is committed to the achievement of our youth," Congressman Murphy said. "I commend these leadership companies for their investment in our future workforce, and encourage others to do the same."

The Partnership also honored Thomas O. Barnes of The Barnes Group with the second annual William A. O'Neill Legacy Award. Governor O'Neill, who died in 2007, founded The Partnership in 1989.

“Today is about celebrating 20 years of success and partnerships, it’s about reflecting on why we’re here in the first place; and it’s about challenging ourselves to respond to new threats now facing our young people,” said Jill Spinetti, president of The Governor’s Prevention Partnership. “To create a seamless prevention fabric within a community, everyone has to get involved, and at The Partnership our job is to channel guidance, resources and connections so that our young people stay on a positive path. We need to ensure that drugs, underage drinking, bullying and violence don’t take them out of the game.”

Throughout the program, youth from Connecticut took turns speaking about how The Partnership’s programs and services helped them succeed. The students included:

Tayla Bogle, a 7th grader at the Geraldine Johnson School in Bridgeport, who spoke on peer-mediation, her experience as a mediator, and its value in resolving conflicts.

Ashley Palmisano, a graduate of Bristol Central High School, spoke of how her mentor during grade school, Cheryl Yetke, helped lead to her job today at Webster Bank. Palmisano also was recently trained by The Partnership to be a Webster Bank mentor.

Tymisha Stewart, an 11th grader at Bullard Havens High School in Bridgeport talked about how her mentor in 4th grade, Donna Mendizabal, helped her with spelling words, memorizing state capitols, and other school work. “Mostly, though, she boosted my confidence,” said Stewart.

Yahaira Hernandez of East Hartford Middle School is a member of the Peer Mediator Program. “I conduct mediations between students and help them find different ways to solve problems and get along better together,” said Hernandez. “Because of the program, I am a better person and make better decisions.”

Josue Camacho, a 14-year-old from The DiLoreto Dual Language Magnet School, spoke eloquently about what it will take – in schools and communities – for him and people his age to be successful in the year 2020.

Keynote speaker, ESPN analyst and former NFL defensive end, Marcellus Wiley congratulated these students on their accomplishments and addressed them, as well as members of the Betsy Ross Arts Magnet Middle School Chorus who closed the luncheon with a performance, by reminding them to avoid drugs, negative peer pressure, and situations that can lead to violence. He urged them to stay focused on their education, and to identify themselves by what they stand for. He also told of how he used sports as an outlet, and asked them to think about their outlets and to also keep education central in their lives.

The Partnership’s Leadership Award was presented to People’s United Bank in Connecticut. People’s United Bank made a significant contribution to prevention efforts statewide, and in

the communities they serve, to promote mentoring and address bullying and risky behavior. With over a decade of involvement, they've donated more than \$150,000, and provided key support to anti-bullying and violence prevention in Connecticut.

The Partnership acknowledged Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield's dedication to prevention with its Partners in Prevention Innovation Award. Anthem's unique project to develop tool kits for mentors to address important issues facing our young people – prevention of tobacco use and obesity – will be used not only in Connecticut, but nationally.

Co-chaired by Governor Rell, The Governor's Prevention Partnership is a not-for-profit collaboration of state and business leaders dedicated to developing and strengthening prevention programs that keep Connecticut youth safe, successful and drug-free. The Partnership is the only statewide organization focusing exclusively on prevention issues affecting youth.

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