

PRESS RELEASE

Camden Youth Step-Team to Perform in Boston, MA

Boston, MA March 19-21, 2011: It's a beautiful Wednesday in Camden, New Jersey and students of the UrbanPromise revel in the sunshine participating in various after school programs. Behind the playground stands a yellow-sided building. Standing outside a passerby may notice a strange rhythmic thudding and occasional laughter but at first step inside, they will feel the energy and devotion of ten young students and their mentors.

These students are members of the UrbanPromise Step-Team, a group formed near the institution's foundation in 1997. The team consists of ten students, 5th through 8th grade, nine females and one male. Students practice once a week in the art studio of the UrbanPromise East Camden Campus.

Jeri Alvarez, Director of Church Relations at UrbanPromise, became involved as a mentor to the step program two years ago. Though she has no personal experience in stepping, Mrs. Alvarez has utilized her connections with local churches and dedication to these students to help the program spread its wings. She started by asking to group to perform with an UrbanPromise speaker at various suburban churches where most of the attendants have never heard of step dancing. This unique presentation serves as a vessel for telling the story of UrbanPromise as well as conveying the cultural backgrounds these students come from.

The popularity of these performances has grown rapidly. The group receives regular invitations, including one to perform at two churches and one school this weekend right outside the Boston area where over a hundred people are expected to attend each event. As their popularity has grown, so has their commitment. This development has allowed the program to hire a coach, UrbanPromise alumna Catherine Soloman. "They've taken it to the next level. It's amazing what they've been able to do with the kids" says Alvarez.

Soloman began stepping in middle school and performed regularly at functions for the school. As a college freshman, Soloman is excited to return to the school. "I enjoy working with the kids, they have great attitudes. It's good to come back to Camden" she states.

As the group prepares for this weekend's performances, the atmosphere is both nervous and excited. Team member Tatianna states calmly "I'm excited about going to Boston. I'm glad we get to have this experience and travel." She explains that step is unlike other sports and competitive activities by providing a creative and open atmosphere.

"Not that much good stuff comes out of Camden. For us to be from Camden performing at these churches we show people that something positive can come

mentions good grades and her involvement in other UrbanPromise activities including Boatworks and SeaQuest.

With the help of mentors like Alvarez and Soloman, Tatianna and her teammates are not only spreading the message of UrbanPromise; they are developing leadership skills, responsibility, and relationships that provide a “step-up” into promising futures.

Scheduled Step-Team Performances:

Saturday March 19, 2011

6:00PM

North Uxbridge Church
5 E Hartford Avenue
Uxbridge, MA 01569

Sunday March 20, 2011

10:00 AM, Lunch, 6:00PM

Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church
25 Cross Street
Whitinsville, MA 01588

Monday March 21, 2011

Three Assemblies
Whitinsville Christian School
279 Linwood Avenue
Whitinsville, MA 01588

About UrbanPromise

UrbanPromise has one clear mission, to build a city of promise, one child at a time. By equipping Camden's children and young adults with the skills necessary for academic achievement and moreover, life management, UrbanPromise has grown from a tiny summer camp program to a multifaceted institution with a reputation of solidarity and success. Among their many programs are private schools for grades k-12, after school programs, summer camps, and various other recreational and educational programs, each targeting different parts of the lives of Camden's youth. Learn more about UrbanPromise at www.urbanpromiseusa.org

Available for comments or interviews:

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