



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Delivers State Grants Totaling \$100K for Peekskill Anti-Gun Violence Initiatives

PETE HARCKHAM August 18, 2022

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Peekskill, NY - New York State Senator Pete Harckham announced today that he has been able to secure state grants totaling \$100K for two recipients involved in separate yet integrated and collaborative anti-gun violence initiatives—the City of Peekskill and Black Diamonds Academic Success, Inc., a nonprofit organization focusing on youth achievement.

Harckham made his announcement at a special press conference here at City Hall, where he was joined by Peekskill Mayor Vivian McKenzie; Black Diamonds Academic Success, Inc. Founder and CEO Martin McDonald; Peekskill City Manager Matthew Alexander; Peekskill Schools Superintendent Dr. David Mauricio; Peekskill Police Chief Leo Dylewski; Peekskill NAACP 2nd Vice President Kecia Palmer-

Cousins; and other local leaders.

“Peekskill is really a small town—everyone knows each other—including perpetrator and victim, so it is essential that young people learn skills to resolve disputes and conflicts peacefully,” said Harckham. “These state grants will allow this city’s leadership to and work collaboratively throughout the community to address the problem of gun violence.”

Added Harckham, “Gun violence is a public health crisis that can only be alleviated with a comprehensive and holistic approach, with residents working together. This is what these grant recipients are working on, and I am ready to continue helping them with my support.”

With its grant funding the City of Peekskill intends to work with young men ages 18-24 with a program that deals with career objectives and mental health needs. Its initiative will be part of a newly created 501(c)3 that will utilize the resources of different entities from around the area to work with groups of people prone to gun violence.

“It is vital that we rectify the problem of gun violence in Peekskill and protect all of our residents,” said McKenzie. “We have been talking with community leaders and various partners to develop ideas in this regard, and we truly appreciate Senator Harckham’s strong support for our work.”

Black Diamonds Academic Success, Inc. is creating programs with its funding to engage the community and hear its concerns, bolster youth leadership and violence prevention / intervention efforts and expose youth to criminal justice systems and innovative achievement-oriented organizations as a way to offer educational opportunities and career preparations.

As part of its initiative, the organization will be hosting a Peekskill Alliance for Peace town hall event on August 23 at Peekskill Middle School to address gun violence; among those partnering in the event are the City of Peekskill, Peekskill School District, NAACP and Peekskill Youth Bureau.

“Black Diamonds Academic Success program is honored and thankful to receive the grant secured by Senator Harckham to address gun violence,” said McDonald. “Our plan is to listen, empower our youth and help them understand that some of life’s lessons are taught outside the classroom.”

Earlier this month, two women were wounded by gunfire while driving on Main Street in Peekskill. To this community’s credit, Harckham noted, its leaders did not wait for this tragic shooting to spring to action; discussions with concerned residents and leaders regarding gun violence began not long after he opened the doors to his Senate District office in Peekskill in January 2019.

The fact the City of Peekskill and Black Diamonds will be working collaboratively throughout the community to with the Peekskill schools, the Peekskill Youth Bureau, Peekskill NAACP, Chief Dylewski and the police department “shows how integrated these efforts will be,” Harckham said.

The funding for these programs was initiated in the Community Violence Intervention Act, which I helped pass last year, and will be granted through the New York State Office of Victims Services.

Dr. Mauricio said, “This is a safe community, and our schools are safe. But when incidents happen, it rocks our community, schools, homes and families. We are here together to be part of a team effort to support our youth. As Senator Harckham said, “One life lost is too many, but one life saved is why we are here.”

To see a video of the press conference, click [here](#).