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Mayor Fulop Announces Launch of New, Innovative Youth Entrepreneurship Training Program as Administration Continues to Expand Youth Enrichment and Employment Opportunities

Program is Part of Fulop Administration’s Jersey City Summer Works Initiative and Funded Through a \$20,000 Grant from TD Bank; Public High School Students Encouraged to Apply

JERSEY CITY – **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** announced today the launch of a **new, innovative youth entrepreneurship training program**, the “**HOPE Business in a Box Academy**,” that will prepare **approximately 25 public high school students** to start their own businesses as the Fulop Administration continues to expand youth enrichment and employment opportunities by partnering with two leading local non-profits.

Based on a national model developed by Operation Hope – a global nonprofit specializing in empowering youth, adults and families to take control of their financial futures – HOPE Business in a Box Academy is a unique collaboration between the Jersey City Economic Development Corporation, the Mayor’s Office, Operation Hope, the Boys and Girls Club of Hudson County and Rising Tide Capital. This exciting new project will help young people use their skills and talents to create real business opportunities, and connect them with local small business mentors.

“Jersey City’s HOPE Business in a Box Academy will empower high school students to become tomorrow’s business leaders and encourage them to see themselves as budding entrepreneurs,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “The program is an important addition to Jersey City Summer Works, our summer youth employment and enrichment initiative, and we look forward to seeing them put their business ideas in action.”

The program is funded through a \$20,000 grant TD Bank, and is the newest component of Mayor Fulop’s Summer Works Initiative that launched in 2014. JC Summer Works is a comprehensive summer youth employment initiative that emphasizes the need for wide-ranging employment and enrichment opportunities for young people including the Jersey City Summer Internship Program, City Youth Jobs, the Summer Works Arts Program, Saturday Jump Starts enrichment program, and the HOPE Business In A Box Academy.

“TD believes that it is important to invest in our communities and our youth,” said **Don Buckley, Market President, TD Bank**. “The HOPE Business in a Box Academy Program is a great way to help develop the talent of young students in our neighborhoods and enable them to be future business leaders, and we are honored to support such an empowering initiative.”

Since taking office, the Fulop Administration has made creating youth employment and enrichment opportunities a priority by hiring nearly 2,000 young people last year and this year in summer jobs and hosting more than 200 youth enrichment programs over the summer.

(more)

Successful students in the HOPE Business in a Box Academy will be eligible to receive business development funding to launch their businesses through the program, which will culminate in a business pitch competition in September.

From July 8 through August 14, students enrolled in the program will attend twice-weekly entrepreneurship training sessions (Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.) at the Boys and Girls Club of Hudson County, a local youth organization which has enriched the lives of thousands of children and teenagers for more than a century and is deeply committed to offering support to under-served youth.

“HOPE Business in a Box Academy is a very exciting and innovative program model. Teens will develop the skills and attributes needed to become successful in the workforce,” said **Gary Greenberg, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Hudson County**. “This hands-on approach is exactly what is needed to make their academic pursuits even more meaningful. They will be motivated to develop the abilities to become Jersey City's future business leaders.”

In addition to financial literacy and business planning skills, participants will learn directly from and be inspired by local business leaders who will serve as program mentors. Students will also work closely with Rising Tide Capital, a nationally-recognized non-profit based in Jersey City that helps entrepreneurs and communities build strong businesses that transform lives, strengthen families and create vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods. To date, Rising Tide has provided training and support to more than 1,200 entrepreneurs.

“As an organization that exists to empower entrepreneurs to start and grow successful businesses, we understand the importance of harnessing the talent and entrepreneurial energy in our youth. They are the job creators and small business owners of the future,” said **Alfa Demmellash, Chief Executive Officer of Rising Tide Capital**. “This is why we are beyond excited to join this unique partnership to support Jersey City youth. Rising Tide Entrepreneurs are committed change agents and role models within their communities and we look forward to connecting them with aspiring youth entrepreneurs.”

In September, students who participated in the HOPE Business in a Box Academy will participate in a business pitch competition that will allow them to pitch their idea to a panel of small business experts and community leaders. Successful students will be eligible to receive business development funding to launch their businesses.

“We’re pleased to be working closely with our partners in Jersey City to launch our HOPE Business In A Box Academies initiative which empowers young people to take control of their future and to see themselves as dynamic members of their community who can contribute real and sustainable value for their local economy,” said **Mary Hagerty Ehram, President, Global Youth Empowerment Group Operation HOPE, Inc.**

Eligible applicants must be Jersey City residents who are public high school students entering the tenth grade in September. Students can apply online at <http://jerseycitysummerworks.org/business-in-a-box/application/>. Applications will be due on Wednesday, June 24. If you are interested in serving as a small business mentor, please contact the JC Summer Works Team at jcsummerworks@jcnj.org.

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