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CONTACT: Karin Pouw

(323) 960-3500

mediarelations@churchofscientology.net

Meet a Scientologist—Verlene Cheeseboro is Creating a Positive Future for Harlem Youth

Realizing that incarceration does little to really help the community or the individual, Verlene Cheeseboro looked for positive solutions. She found them in Scientology.

Verlene Cheeseboro believes in the future, and the future is our children. But she knows belief is not enough. It takes effective education and the community working together to guarantee their success.

“As a sergeant with the New York State Department of Corrections, I was dealing with the casualties of the education system,” says Cheeseboro. “I knew this was a dead-end activity.”

So in 1998, she started running a tutoring program in Harlem to help the youth who were failing in school.

One of the tutors at Cheeseboro's center introduced her to Study Technology developed by L. Ron Hubbard. She was impressed.

"I want to give the children the opportunity to obtain a quality education and be successful in life," she says. "Study Tech was the data they needed to open the door to both. I immediately adopted it for my tutoring project."

Hearing about a program called H.E.L.P (Hollywood Education and Literacy Project) that uses this technology in mentoring and tutoring, she decided to train at their Los Angeles headquarters to open a center of her own—H.E.L.P. Harlem.

Cheeseboro started the project in the basement of the Greater Metropolitan Baptist Church in Harlem and conducted tutoring sessions at two additional locations, the Harlem Police Athletic Center and Youth Build Homes and Projects. She incorporated the program as a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, trained more than 30 tutors and 75 students on Study Tech, and within the first year got funding through grants to buy computers, equipment, supplies and study materials, and an AmeriCorps VISTA grant for five full-time college graduates to work at the tutoring project.

Cheeseboro is proud of the results.

"Many children have shared with me how well they are doing in school since learning to use Study Tech," she says. "I've even had people come up to me in the street to thank me and to let me know that their son or daughter is in college and doing great."

Cheeseboro found L. Ron Hubbard's education methods so effective, she decided to learn what else he had to offer, and enrolled on courses at one of the Scientology Churches in New York.

"I have gained so much ability through my studies of the books and lectures of L. Ron Hubbard," says Cheeseboro, 66. "I can handle any situation that crops up in life. I feel younger and more energetic than I did when I was half my age."

In 2006, to make Scientology more broadly available, she became part of a corps of Scientologists determined to bring the religion to Harlem. Cheeseboro trained as the Church's Public Affairs Director, and anticipates next year's planned opening of the new Church of Scientology and Scientology Community Center of Harlem as an important event for the entire community.

"Harlem is very spiritual, and Scientology has been warmly welcomed here," says Cheeseboro. "Scientology offers solutions to the myriad problems plaguing communities of color throughout the country, from education and business issues to personal relationship problems and the rampant violence visited upon our youth. And bringing Scientology to Harlem is particularly significant, because Harlem sets the trend for people of color throughout the country."

For more information on the work Scientologists are doing to better their communities, view "Meet a Scientologist" videos at www.Scientology.org.

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The popular "Meet a Scientologist" profiles on the Church of Scientology International Video Channel at Scientology.org now total more than 200

broadcast-quality documentary videos featuring Scientologists from diverse locations and walks of life. The personal stories are told by Scientologists who are educators, teenagers, skydivers, a golf instructor, a hip-hop dancer, IT manager, stunt pilot, mothers, fathers, dentists, photographers, actors, musicians, fashion designers, engineers, students, business owners and more.

A digital pioneer and leader in the online religious community, in April 2008 the Church of Scientology became the first major religion to launch its own official YouTube Video Channel, which has now been viewed by millions of visitors.



Verlene Cheeseboro (right) with Queen Mother Parousia Jordan (center), a Harlem elder, at the opening of the Volunteer Ministers tent in Harlem