



BECAUSE YOUNG PEOPLE CAN NO LONGER BE LOST TO VIOLENCE AND POVERTY.
TRUTH, TRUST & TRANSFORMATION

News Release

Media Contact:

Roca
Angie Rodriguez
(617) 889-5210 x258
Angie_Rodriguez@RocaInc.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2010

Roca's 5th Annual Breakfast Fundraiser raises over \$230,000 to Help Massachusetts' High Risk Young People *Sister Helen Prejean, Author of Dead Man Walking, Delivers Keynote Address Matt Damon will be the Keynote Speaker for 2011 Fundraiser*

(Boston, MA) – Today Roca, the nationally recognized non-profit organization that has helped more than 15,000 high-risk youth to change their lives to become productive citizens, hosted 400 people to hear Sister Helen Prejean, the author of the national best seller and inspiration for the Academy Award winning movie, *Dead Man Walking*, who delivered the keynote address at its fifth annual fundraiser.

Random House generously donated copies of Sister Helen Prejean's *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*, for the Breakfast attendees. The book features two inmates she came to know as a spiritual adviser, including Dobie Williams. **“What happened to Dobie is what happens to people in killing chambers and in warehouses where we have 2,000 young people in life-without-parole sentences, when there is not somebody like Roca to get in their lives and make a difference,”** said Sister Helen.

One example of the lives Roca changes is Zaida Gonzalez who was honored at the event. Zaida went from gang member to legal guardian of her siblings, from being in trouble with the law to a college student graduating from Bunker Hill Community College. Today Zaida works at Roca and Massachusetts General Hospital where she hopes to become a nurse.

“I was so angry because of everything that was happening at home that I decided at one point to turn to a gang. I turned to the streets because I figured this is what everyone expected of me anyway. But in my heart I knew this was not for me-and I did not want to see my younger brother or sister go through this. I found a family at Roca. Roca, my mother, my siblings are the reasons why I am alive. Now what I wish for is to teach others the same hope and chance they gave me” Gonzalez said.



BECAUSE YOUNG PEOPLE CAN NO LONGER BE LOST TO VIOLENCE AND POVERTY.

TRUTH, TRUST & TRANSFORMATION

Among those who attended the fundraiser were Michael Brown, CEO, City Year; Secretary Joanne Goldstein, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development; Secretary Mary Beth Heffernan, Executive Office of Public Safety and Support; Commissioner Angelo McClain of the Department of Children and Families; Chairman Charles Murphy, Massachusetts House Ways and Means; and Sheriff Michael Ashe of the Hampden County Sheriff's Department;

Molly Baldwin, founder and executive director of Roca remarked about the need for even more services today as there are even more young people in need. "Roca has tremendous support from a host of sources law enforcement, private donors and philanthropies as well as federal state and local government officials and we are so grateful. But the challenges our people face today are greater than ever and we need to find more resources to help them." Baldwin remarked.

In fact after 22 years in Chelsea, Roca is establishing its first new operation since its founding in Springfield to help that city with the challenges it is facing with gangs and youth crime. Roca has been working with Hampden County Sheriff Mike Ashe to form a partnership to help high risk youth in Springfield with the model that has been so successful in Chelsea. Roca Springfield will begin July 1.

For more information about Roca visit www.rocainc.org. To watch Boston Latino's coverage of the event visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeajNIjrJnE>.

.# # #