

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DISTRICT, PATERSON CHURCHES JOIN TOGETHER TO LAUNCH
CONFIDENCE CLOSETS, SERVE OUR SCHOOLS INITIATIVES**

Initiative will give adolescents access to toiletries they cannot afford

Photos attached: Today's press event.

PATERSON – In an effort to help the district's adolescent students have access to personal hygiene products they may not be able to afford, Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer and pastors of local churches gathered at the Central Office Building to launch the Confidence Closets initiative. Partnering in that initiative is the *Serve Our Schools* initiative, a joint, unified effort of Paterson churches and other faith-based organizations committed to helping to fulfill the needs of Paterson students and their families.

At today's news conference, Shafer said that many of the district's students continue to feel the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that impact has been exacerbated by continuing inflation of consumer goods prices in recent months. As families juggle competing priorities – deciding whether to buy groceries, pay utilities, or meet other expenses – some opt to do without buying toiletries.

"This can have a direct impact on students' attendance and performance in school," Shafer said. "Students who aren't confident in their hygiene may simply choose not to come to school. Even if they show up, they will not be at their best. How confident could a student feel about giving a presentation in front of a class, working closely with a group of students on a project, or going to gym class if their basic hygiene needs are not met?"

The goal of the Confidence Closets initiative is to provide toiletries to students in 33 school locations in the district, serving about 11,500 students in grades 6 through 12. It is estimated that will require more than 200,000 individual toiletries items to be collected.

Pastor Matt Andersen, Executive Director of Star of Hope Ministries, Inc. said that the *Serve Our Schools* initiative would be helping the district to maintain supplies of personal hygiene products through donation drives and other community outreach efforts.

"Unfortunately, it's often communities like Paterson that are hit the hardest from the economic effects of COVID-19 and continued inflation," said Andersen. "Even further, it's often our kids that are most profoundly impacted. We as the Church of Paterson want to be a part of the solution, and we know that we can accomplish more together than we can individually. Now is the time for us to come together to serve our schools and our children in a very real, tangible way."

Those who are interested in helping the Confidence Closets initiative should call the Superintendent's Office at 973-321-0980 or email superintendent@paterson.k12.nj.us.

Those interested in partnering with the *Serve our Schools* initiative can contact Pastor Matt Andersen, Star of Hope Ministries' Executive Director, at info@sohm.org or by phone at 973-742-1222 x18. Tax deductible financial donations can be made online at www.sohm.org/schools or checks payable to Star of Hope Ministries can be mailed to Star of Hope Ministries at 34 Broadway, Paterson, NJ 07505. Please note: *Serve our Schools* on your check.

Joining Shafer and Andersen in making today's announcement were Grace Giglio, principal of Norman S. Weir School and the president of the Principals' Association, Pastor Carolyn McCombs, Executive Director of New Destiny Family Success Center, Pastor Michael McDuffie, President of the Paterson Pastors Workshop and Paterson IAAM Initiative, Rev. Dr. John A. Algera, Paterson Ecclesia Team Lead, and Pastor Matt Andersen, Star of Hope Ministries Executive Director.

Needed Toiletries For Paterson Public Schools' Confidence Closets

Boys

- Bar soap
- Body wash
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Shaving cream/gel
- Disposable razors for men
- Combs
- Hairbrushes
- Hair styling products
- Nail clippers

Girls

- Bar soap
- Body wash
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Skin moisturizer
- Deodorant
- Shaving cream/gel for women
- Disposable razors for women
- Feminine napkins
- Tampons
- Combs
- Hairbrushes
- Hair styling products
- Hair ties

Other

- Dental Floss
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Nail clippers