

**Youth Leadership Caucus Presents:  
Youth Leadership Summit  
June 11, 2017**

**LIAAC Speaks to Teens About Building Healthy Relationships**

**By Kristina Robles**

What is a healthy relationship? It is a question that would stump many adults. But what about those who are at the beginning of their dating experience. On Sunday, June 11, 2017, LIAAC's Leah Richberg joined Charlene Rogers, of Long Island Against Domestic Violence (LIADV), in speaking to local teens from the Youth Leadership Caucus (YLC) about how to build healthy relationships and the warning signs of abuse, as part of an interactive workshop for Presiding Officer and 15<sup>th</sup> District Legislator DuWayne Gregory's inaugural Youth Leadership Summit.

According to Rogers, a staggering one-third of teens are affected by dating abuse. During the workshop, the teens learned about the many types of abuse, not just physical violence. It is going through someone's cell phone without permission; forcing someone to stop speaking to his or her friends; or keeping track of other's social media activity. Abusive behavior is anything that is used to gain power over someone else, or as Rogers likes to explain, anything that has "PPC"— pattern, power, control.

During the discussion about the warning signs of abuse, the teens were surprised that jealousy, even a small amount, was a relationship "red flag". Many believed that a small amount of jealousy was a sign of affection and only was a problem when it escalated into extreme behavior. Rogers explained to them that jealousy can be used as a tool to control and manipulate emotion; and warned against "quick involvement", when the other person takes the relationship too serious, too quickly.

Richberg spoke to them about the importance of good communication and compromising, values which can be used beyond dating and into their academic and professional careers. She talked to them about setting up boundaries and standing firm behind them, saying, "No one can make you do anything you don't want to do." A few of the teens admitted that they, or people they know, have been asked to do something they were not comfortable doing. Richberg showed them ways to navigate the touchy subject of boundaries with their partners or future partners.

By the end of the workshop the teens left with a better understanding of what a healthy relationship should look and feel like; how sharing your life with someone does not mean scarifying parts of it, but enhancing, lifting, and supporting each other equally.

The Youth Leadership Caucus was founded by Presiding Officer and 15<sup>th</sup> District Legislator DuWayne Gregory to encourage minority youths, grades 8-12, to become civically involved in their community. These teens come from all over the Town of Babylon and meet semi-monthly to discuss the issues that affect them. During the summit on Sunday, YLC members, and other youths from the surrounding communities, could sit in for two workshops, choosing from a variety of different topics, such as: Mental Health and Youth, Healthy Relationships, Insidious Racism, Stress Management, Environmental Strategies, Effects of Drugs on Youth, and Do's and Don'ts of Social Media.

Other organizations that participated in the summit, along with LIAAC and LIADV, were the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission, Amityville Memorial High School, Starflower Experience, I Affirm Wellness, Suffolk County Legislature, and Suffolk County Department of Labor.

The inaugural event was a big success with dozens of local teens in attendance, all of them leaving with invaluable information they can use to build their futures and the future of our communities.