



Civic leader and entrepreneur Debra Peek-Haynes launches Healthy Youth Project
Program empowers high school students to lead in the area of health for their families

DALLAS (December 3, 2018) – Local entrepreneur and health advocate Debra Peek-Haynes is proactively addressing the realities of food insecurity that hit underserved communities and communities of color the hardest. Debra has launched the Healthy Youth Project curriculum to culinary arts students at Lincoln High School and Humanities/Communications Magnet in South Dallas.

For the past twenty years, Debra has conducted health seminars nationally and at Friendship-West Baptist Church, where her husband has been the Senior Pastor for over 32 years and boasts a congregation of 12,000. They continue to demonstrate their commitment to a better and healthier community, not only in Dallas/Ft. Worth but around the world.

Twenty one percent of disadvantaged children 6 to 17 years of age have heart disorders. In addition, African American and Hispanic children are disproportionately represented in measures of obesity. Debra created the Healthy Youth Project, so students could take ownership in solving systemic problems that have existed in their neighborhoods since long before they were born.

“I want students to leave the course more conscious about what they eat and more confident in preparing food at home,” said Haynes. “The youth know that their access to fresh produce and healthy options are more limited than those in other communities.” In addition to interactive lectures, each student received a copy of Debra’s most recent book *The Simplified Guide For Healthy Living* that contains recipes that are easily prepared at home as well as a companion workbook.

Debra will lead a field trip to Paul Quinn College, where Lincoln students will visit the school’s *We Over Me Farm*. The farm gained national attention when Paul Quinn President Michael Sorrell decided to turn the school’s football field into an organic farm. Darciea Houston, the Farm Student Manager, will lead a seminar on how students can expand their organic garden at school and at home. The farm is managed by students and provides food in a federally recognized food desert.

Debra’s partnership with Lincoln High School includes a six-week interactive course engaging students through cooking demonstrations, menu planning advice and tips on organic gardening. “The program encourages students to think critically about the food choices they make and the long-term effects of their decisions,” Debra said. “They will remember these lessons and refer back to them in the years ahead.” Debra’s initial program was sponsored by Texas Capital Bank, UNT Dallas Foundation and Urban Specialist.

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