

# “I HAVE A DREAM” FOUNDATION®

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THE “I HAVE A DREAM” FOUNDATION HOSTS SPRING GALA  
IN NEW YORK CITY, JUNE 11, 2009

Secretary of Education ARNE DUNCAN speaks, ROSIE O’DONNELL receives the Visionary Award and DWAYNE JOHNSON presents the Eugene M. Lang Achievement Award to DANY GARCIA

(Kendra Walker, recent Florida A&M University graduate, receives the 2009 Spirit of the Dream Award)

**NEW YORK – June 11, 2009** – Over 400 enthusiastic supporters attended the “I Have a Dream” Foundation’s Spring Gala tonight at 583 Park Avenue in New York City. Among the evening’s guests were keynote speaker **United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan; Rosie O’Donnell**, who was honored with the **Visionary Award; Dany Garcia**, recipient of the **Eugene M. Lang Achievement Award**, presented by **Dwayne Johnson**; country music star **Lee Ann Womack**, who performed her hit song, “I Hope You Dance;” **Carlos Watson**, MSNBC Anchor and the evening’s emcee; **Eugene M. Lang**, Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the “I Have A Dream” Foundation; **Patricia Velásquez; Sharon Bush; Mary Ann and Arthur Siskind; Chancellor of New York City Schools, Joel Klein; Chancellor Matthew Goldstein (CUNY)**; current and former students in the program (“Dreamers”); members of O’Donnell’s **Broadway Kids** who performed; and many others.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan previously ran the non-profit education program, the Ariel Education Initiative (1992-98), which helped fund the college education for a class of children in a low-income community under the “I Have A Dream” Foundation. He began the evening with remarks noting that “ ‘I Have A Dream’ programs enable talented, passionate individuals to tutor and mentor children, work with families, and give those children the chance to be successful through opportunities they so desperately need and deserve.”

In thanking Secretary Duncan and welcoming guests, President and CEO Iris Chen said, “As an organization committed to educational equality for all children, we are energized by our nation’s renewed focus on education. The President and Secretary’s efforts are an inspiration to us all.”

In the United States today, less than 15% of children in low-income communities will obtain bachelor’s degree, compared with 26% nationwide, and more than 50% in high-income communities. Since 1986, the “I Have a Dream” Foundation has been working to ensure that all children have the opportunity to pursue higher education. This organization is unique in that it focuses on an cohorts, working with them from elementary school through high school, and upon graduation from high school, each “Dreamer” receives guaranteed tuition assistance for higher education. Since blossoming from a dream to reality, the “I Have A Dream” Foundation has supported over 15,000 students in 35 local affiliates nationwide and is currently working with over 4,000 “Dreamers” in 17 states, Washington, D.C., and New Zealand.

Rosie O'Donnell has taken her popularity and put it to good use. As a tireless crusader for children, she established "Rosie's For All Kids Foundation," which since its inception in 1997 has raised over \$60 million and awarded more than \$27 million in grants to over 1,400 child-related nonprofit organizations to benefit low-income families across the country.

Dany Garcia is a dedicated philanthropist, business woman, entertainment industry mogul and mother. She is the founder and president of an "I Have a Dream" program in Miami called *The Beacon Experience, A Foundation for Success*. In addition, Garcia is co-founder and vice president of The Dwayne Johnson Rock Foundation, which works with children worldwide to promote health education and physical fitness.

Despite unimaginable circumstances, Kendra Walker realized college was within reach when she was introduced to the "I Have A Dream" Foundation in 1995. Kendra's mother died when she was only two years old. Shortly after moving in with her aunt, her aunt also passed away, and Kendra was forced into Florida's foster care system. Despite these hardships, Kendra concentrated on excelling at school. Currently a senior at Florida A&M University, Kendra will graduate with a bachelor's degree in accounting this winter and plans to enter graduate school to earn her CPA. Kendra is also a motivational speaker to children in Miami's foster care system and hopes that one day she will be able to help the "I Have A Dream" Foundation in their efforts to invest in scholarship funds for inner-city youth.

Launched in 1981 by entrepreneur Eugene M. Lang, the "I Have A Dream" Foundation began with the mission to send all 61 students of the sixth grade class of P.S. 121 in East Harlem to college. Now in 2009, they are making a commitment to expand their support to even more children across the country. The need and opportunity for impact have never been greater, and they are ready to lead the charge towards a better education system and high standards of excellence for all.

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