

For Immediate Release  
June 16, 2016  
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**A Year of Hard Work and Success Celebrated at Oasis on June 16**  
*Paterson Non-Profit Hosted "Empowerment Ceremony" for Adult Education Students*

**PATERSON, NJ** – With an overflowing dining room full of adult learners, teachers, staff, friends, and members of the Board of Directors, the Oasis community celebrated the end of another highly successful academic year on Thursday, June 16 at the annual Empowerment Ceremony. This is the "graduation" ceremony for the 260 adult students in Oasis' GED, ESL, Computer, Workplace Readiness, and Bank Teller Certification classes.

"This is always one of the best days of the year at Oasis," noted Executive Director Jennifer Brady. "Not only do we as a staff celebrate the hard work of our women in improving their lives, but they celebrate each other. It's quite extraordinary to see women from 25 different countries cheering and clapping for each other, recognizing the commitment and effort it takes to succeed at Oasis. There is such a warm and authentic feeling in the room each year."

Debbie Duffy, President of the Oasis Board of Directors added, "For many of our women, it is a struggle just to get to Oasis each day, yet they do it. At our Empowerment Ceremony, we celebrate this hard-working attitude as well as their academic success."

This year's guest speaker was Janelle Alfred, a 2015 graduate of the Oasis GED Program and current honors student at Passaic County Community College. She spoke of her personal life challenges and how she found a home to better herself at Oasis. "Ms. Merry told me I am smarter than I thought I was and that she had confidence in me because she knew I could do it." Janelle also provided encouragement to current students, noting "To you who have just begun the quest, do not lose hope. Trust your teachers, believe in yourself and have faith in God. Always remember to never let anyone look down on you unless they are extending a helping hand." Janelle earned a 3.9 this past semester at PCCC where she is studying to be a nurse.

"Today we celebrated each and every woman 'who believed she could ... and did'," said Education Coordinator Evelyn Cuciti. "It was a wonderful day, filled with pride and emotion. We will miss our students over the summer and look forward to seeing them in September!"

Special guests attending the Empowerment Ceremony included Paterson Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres and City Councilman Andre Sayegh (Sixth Ward).

**About Oasis - A Haven for Women and Children:**

Oasis is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Paterson, New Jersey whose mission is to change the lives of women and children by breaking the cycle of poverty through compassionate programs designed to feed, clothe, educate, and empower women and children in need. Over 600 women and children are served every day. Learn more at [www.oasisnj.org](http://www.oasisnj.org).

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