

A 'Renaissance' is in the Making at Automotive High School

By Craig McGuire

An innovative scholastic program which has motivated students across the country is achieving results at a Brooklyn high school.

The Renaissance Education Foundation, a national non-profit service foundation that assists educators in building relationships with local businesses, has been successfully implemented at Automotive High School, 50 Bedford Avenue.

Students at Automotive High School, the first New York City school involved in the program, join pupils from over 2,000 participating schools nationwide.

It began in 1992 when Automotive High School Assistant Principal Dr. Bruce Billig attended a Re-

naissance conference and brought the program home to Brooklyn.

While the Renaissance Foundation provides direction and consultation, the school is responsible for soliciting funding for the program. That's when one of the school's more notable alumni stepped in.

Joseph Manfredi, owner of the Manfredi Automotive Group, was instrumental in securing funding for the program, which included the support of the Toyota Motor Corporation.

Living the American Dream, Manfredi came to America at an early age, and speaking little English, he eventually enrolled at the Automotive High School, where he graduated with the class of 1957.

"I know what a program like this means to these students," said Manfredi. "Many of them will not be going on to college, and this will provide them with the necessary skills to work in the industry."

At recent award ceremonies held at the school, students from each grade received recognition for scholastic achievement.

The size of the trophy each student received depended upon the student's grade point average, but all students who passed all of their classes received an award.

"This program has inspired me, because someone has finally pushed me," said Reginald Medard, a junior at the school. "These awards give me something

to aim for."
 "For many of these students this is the first time they are being given credit for doing the right thing," said Principal Steve Gilbert. "Now that they have shown us that they can do the work, we are asking them to show us they can do more."

A celebration will be held on May 3 at the school to recognize what has been accomplished, and what can be done in the future.

Billig anticipates over 3,000 people will attend, including representatives from the automotive industry, elected officials, and educators. At the award ceremonies, 140 students received t-shirts which will allow them to gain admittance to the event.

Manfredi To Hire Graduates

The celebration will also mark the opening of the Toyota Technical Institute (TTI) at the school, a \$250,000 facility that will help upgrade the training the students receive.

"Students will now have a golden opportunity to work on cars they will be working on when they enter the industry," said Billig.

Recognizing the skilled workers that will be produced by the TTI, Manfredi has promised to hire between five and 10 graduates next June.

While the program has received the support of sponsors like Manfredi, Toyota, Con Edison, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and others, as well as attracted the interest of the Brooklyn



A junior at the Automotive High School receives recognition for academic achievement.

Photos by Craig McGuire



Students display T-shirts, donated by sponsor Joe Manfredi, that will enable them to attend a celebration held at the Automotive High School on May 3rd.

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