

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Paying It Forward During Black History Month**

Blue Hill Data continues to reach out to help local communities. In celebrating Black History Month, the first grade teachers from Chester Community Charter School, Philadelphia, appealed to Blue Hill to find motivational speakers to visit their school and speak with their students.

***“It’s about giving the kids exposure to people they could look up to, that may have come from the same background, and yet have managed to ‘make it’. Our kids are facing issues on a daily basis, most don’t come from a safe home environment or have enough to eat – and yet we expect them to pay attention in school. They don’t even realize why school is important. So we’d like to give them good role models that they can relate to, and look up to, people who have overcome adversity, done well, and now want to give back.”***

Our challenge was to find role models who would truly motivate the kids, and demonstrate to them that staying in school and doing their homework could help them build a better life. So how did we make this happen? By having two extraordinary ex-professional football players visit 63 first graders in their classroom.

On February 16<sup>th</sup> our two star athletes arrived!

**Bruce Eugene** stands six feet tall, and weighs over 260 pounds. Having played for the New Orleans Saints, the Canadian Football League’s Saskatchewan Roughriders, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Bruce was given the nickname “Round Mound of Touchdown.” After his professional football career, he moved into coaching, motivating students at several schools in the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) in NYC. Bruce became the first African-American coach to win PSAL’s football city championship at the highest level in 2015. In that same year, the New York Jets organization named him the “High School Coach of the Year.” He has recently completed a Master’s program in Special Education, and believes coaching the high school students his greatest achievement.

**Brandon London** is a six foot, four inch, 210 pound wide receiver, with a career history playing for the New York Giants, the Miami Dolphins, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the Montreal Alouettes. Brandon earned a Super Bowl ring as a member of the Giants’ practice squad in Super Bowl XLII. He is currently working for a major radio network as a broadcaster hosting football games.

So on this Tuesday morning, we squeezed 63 first graders into one classroom, after the teachers had repositioned their desks around the perimeter, and for the next 2 hours the kids were mesmerized by their stories and experiences of growing up. Both were close to their grandmothers who greatly influenced them; a way of life most of these students were able to relate to. Bruce and Brandon were skilled at keeping their attention and held the students spellbound as they emphasized the importance of staying in school and doing their homework. Most importantly, they discussed how practice makes perfect, especially in developing and following some daily disciplines: getting your homework done after school before you do anything else, staying positive in the face of adversity, and seeking people out

within their school that they could rely on. They also encouraged the students to participate and practice the sports they enjoy, to keep them motivated and “on top of their game to make you feel good that you can surpass your own capabilities.”

**Vince Ellerson**, Business Development Executive at Blue Hill Data Services, was instrumental in putting this exciting event together. Vince is a founding member of Next Level Football Academy that coaches and mentors under privileged elementary and high school students, teaching them how to stay on point academically and potentially achieving scholarships and becoming college student-athletes.

Receiving their own personally signed football from Bruce and Brandon was definitely the highlight of the day for all 63 first grade students. Of course there was an abundance of healthy snacks as well.

In conclusion, the teachers and students were thrilled– and Blue Hill looks forward to sharing future events to motivate children so they can achieve to their greatest potential.



**In the photo left to right:** Vince Ellerson, Bruce Eugene, Rosary De Filippis, Brandon London, JeVaughn Thomas

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