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### **SAFE SPACE'S FREE PERFORMANCE DAZZLES JAMAICA**

Last night, on Monday, September 13, 2010, the Jamaica Performing Arts Center was filled with music, dancing, and positive vibrations during a free community concert, *Safe Space and Broadway Light Up Jamaica Avenue*, in celebration of Safe Space's new headquarters in Jamaica, Queens.

Infused with themes of hope, community, and self-empowerment, the hour-long event featured seven professional performers from Broadway in South Africa, a nonprofit that uses the arts to impact at-risk populations, along with 33 youth from across Safe Space's programs ranging in age from seven to 22.

*Mamma Mia!* star and dance teacher Frankie James Grande and 10 Safe Space youth warmed up the crowd by dancing to Deborah Cox's "Beautiful U R" with synchronized moves, helicopter swings, and acrobatic handstands. Later the crowd was moved by a duet version of "Wheels of a Dream" by Brandon Victor Dixon, who was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance in *The Color Purple* and will play Ray Charles in the upcoming *Unchain My Heart*, and singing teacher Sasha Sloan, who starred in *Ragtime* at the Kennedy Center.

"Being up on stage was a really good experience. I felt free and warm," said Wonkly Martinez, 22, a long-time participant in Safe Space's Drop-In Center. "It was very exciting to be in front of the audience and see that many people cheering us on. The performers were all supportive of each other, and it felt like we were a real team. I loved it...It happened so fast."

One of the evening's most touching moments came while Broadway in South Africa's Executive Director Sean Bradford, who played Simba in *The Lion King*, was singing "If You're Out There" by John Legend with accompaniment from Frankie James Grande and Christopher Spaulding, a member of the original Broadway cast of *Curtains*. During the song, 25 youngsters from Safe Space's after-school enrichment programs came up on stage and joined in the chorus as the audience clapped, swayed, and smiled. The grand finale had a similar feeling as all the Broadway in South Africa stars joined all the Safe Space youth to sing "Let the Sunshine In," the classic from *Hair*.

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“It was an incredible experience working with these amazing kids,” said Frankie James Grande. “I’m always inspired by people who rise above the challenges they’ve been given, and these kids are the epitome of that.”

Safe Space also presented the Jack Kupferberg Lifetime Achievement Award to Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, who spoke about the importance of working with youth. “They are our future,” she said.

Safe Space, which offers a wide array of services focusing on building strong families, fostering mental and physical health, reducing community and family violence, and providing school-based enrichment, moved to its brand new Headquarters in the heart of downtown Jamaica in July. *Safe Space and Broadway Light Up Jamaica Avenue* was a celebration of the agency’s relocation and renewed, exclusive focus on Southeast Queens.

“We knew this was going to be a special event, and it exceeded our expectations,” said Safe Space President and CEO Christine Molnar. “The talent was tremendous, and performing with the stars from Broadway in South Africa gave our youth the chance to dream big as well as the courage to realize those dreams.”

*With the strong belief that everybody deserves to live in a healthy and secure environment, Safe Space offers a wide array of services focusing on mental health, community health, at-risk youth, violence prevention and school-based education enrichment. Based in Southeastern Queens with a strong presence in Jamaica, Far Rockaway and Richmond Hill, Safe Space annually works for more than 10,000 individuals, including some of the most disadvantaged children and families in New York State.*

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