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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, CARDINAL DOLAN CELEBRATE FIRST DAY OF
PRE-K FOR ALL AT SACRED HEART SCHOOL ON STATEN ISLAND**

Mayor de Blasio: Well, good morning everyone. It is such a joy to be here on Staten Island for the first day of school. You see behind you a lot of happy kids. We just came from a classroom filled with such energy, such focus, kids learning, a great teacher in there – Ms. C.C, who is a veteran pre-k teacher – showing them how to start learning from day one. It was really exciting. It is such an honor to be here today with His Eminence Cardinal Dolan, as we start this school year, as we start this historic expansion of pre-k. And I want to thank the cardinal and everyone at the archdiocese for being such important partners in this effort. It's been a great example of shared teamwork, shared values, shared vision. And it's gone really well, as you can see here at Sacred Heart, today.

Again, all over this city, more than 50,000 four-year-olds showing up for pre-k for the first day – great reports coming back already – and what's happening here at Sacred Heart is a great example. Of course, this school is so great because of the whole team here. I want to thank the principal, Evelyn Lacagnino, for her great leadership. Thank you so much. And I want to thank all the members of our team at City Hall and at the Tweed building – Deputy Mayor Richard Buery, Chancellor Carmen Fariña – all the members of the team who brought us to this day. The elected officials who are here – you're going to hear from them in a moment – I want to thank them for having been consistent and energetic supporters of our pre-k effort. Matt Titone and Michael Cusick from the Assembly will be joined by the Borough President Jimmy Oddo in a few minutes, and you'll hear from them.

But let me tell you, this school is such a good news story. Good things have been happening at this school for years. Let's give them a round of applause for that.

[Applause]

But pre-k – before this year – pre-k was limited to one classroom, about 18 kids. This year, at Sacred Heart, there will be 54 kids in full-day pre-k.

[Applause]

So, we've tripled the pre-k capacity here at this school. And that's exactly what we want to do in every neighborhood of this city this year, and again next year – expanding even more to upwards of 70,000 kids in full-day pre-k. This is a big step one.

Next year, with the close collaboration of the cardinal and the archdiocese and so many other partners around the city, we're going to get to the point where every single child is guaranteed a pre-k seat – every child of pre-k age in this city. And this partnership is allowing us to do that.

I have to tell you – again, we’ve seen over and over again what pre-k achieves. If you look in this classroom at Sacred Heart, you see a microcosm of New York City – you see every kind of New Yorker. And I know our catholic school system prides itself in being open to all. In Sacred Heart, you saw the future of New York City – every kind of child together, learning, cooperating, growing. This is what we want to achieve. And we knew from the beginning, that the core of our pre-k effort would be in our traditional public schools, but we knew we had to go so much farther. We needed many more partnerships to reach every child. We knew we needed the talent and the energies of our partners. We needed the space that they had, that they can reach so many more children with. We knew this partnership would allow us to fulfill our vision. And I have to tell you, the willingness from our partners to work with us every step of the way – and we all had to do it on short notice.

Cardinal, I know you’re able to invoke a higher authority. This being done in under six months may classify as a miracle. Okay? We had to say it. [Laughs] But all over the city, you’re seeing this partnership come to life today. In catholic schools around the city – and the archdiocese and in the diocese of Brooklyn – over 3,000 full-day pre-k seats in our catholic schools, over 1,200 full-day pre-k seats in Jewish schools, about 100 full-day seats in Muslim schools, and about 200 full-day seats in charter schools.

This is an absolute team effort, and we’re going to expand upon it for next year. But everyone’s on the same page when it comes to the health and safety of our children. That standard has been set and stuck to across all these partners. Our catholic school system has been incredible in holding the highest standards and working with us every step of the way, and a strong curriculum based on the Common Core model, and well-trained teachers. That is common in every site and that’s why it’s going to work.

Pre-k makes such a profound difference. It will affect families today because parents will have an available free option that actually fits their schedules so they can go to work, so they can do all the things they need to in their life. But you’re going to see the results of this program – fifteen, twenty years from now, you’re going to see the full impact. We have a whole generation of kids that are going to be better educated, able to complete high school, go to college, go to work, in a way we’ve never seen before.

Today, we’re feeling the positive impact. What we’re going to see down the line is going to be so much greater. And it’s going to change this city for good, and for the long-term, and for the good of all.

A quick quote before I introduce His Eminence, and I think he’ll appreciate this one. Mother Theresa, who’s one of the great examples in world history—

Cardinal Dolan: Tomorrow’s her feast day.

Mayor: Tomorrow’s her feast day. We thought of these things. [Laughs] Someone who exemplifies reaching those in need, even when it was unlikely or deemed impossible. She said, “I alone cannot change the world. But I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” Today, we are starting those ripples of hope. Today we have 50,000 children starting the right way. You’re going to feel that effect in every classroom, in every grade these kids go to thereafter. You’re going to feel the effect when they’re adults. All of us together – and a deep appreciation to our partners in the Catholic schools – all of us together are starting those ripples of hope in action today. With that, and with my profound congratulations, it is my honor to introduce a man who’s been a partner in so many of the things we’re doing, and has really been there for our children every step of the way, His Eminence Cardinal Dolan.

Cardinal Dolan: Thank you, mayor. Gracious. Borough President Oddo, there he is, yeah.

Mayor: I knew you’d make it.

Cardinal Dolan: How are you, Mr. President? Thank you—you’re in trouble.

Mayor: You're in trouble? I'm never late. I am never late.

Cardinal Dolan: Your Honor, Mayor de Blasio, you've been characteristically generous in expressing appreciation. Let me thank you. The invitation that you gave to the archdiocese of New York, the invitation that came through Dr. McNiff, to cooperate in what I think is an extraordinarily bold, promising, and noble project – we appreciated that very much, the trust and the confidence. We're in the business of serving the community. We've been doing it well for over two centuries. That you would invite us to be part of this project—thank you very much. Chirlane, we're grate—it's so good to see you. The mayor and I just visited with some of our UPK children. We did all right, I hope. She was a pro, and you could tell she's a loving mother—you had that natural touch there, so we're glad you were part of this. Borough President Oddo, we're glad you're here. Matthew and Michael, thank you for all your support. Evelyn, it's all about the principal, it's all about a good priest, it's all about Dr. McNiff and our leadership at the top. We're just honored to be part of this. Jesus said, let the little children come to me, and do they ever, here at Sacred Heart. So, hallelujah, God bless the new school year.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Your Eminence, and again, thank you, this has been extraordinary partnership, and it shows, when everyone works together for a common goal, what can be achieved. We've had that partnership with our elected officials as well. Jimmy Oddo never hesitates to speak up for Staten Island. He wanted to make sure Staten Island would be fully present and accounted for in this pre-k program. I think, Mr. President, you'll find the numbers quite impressive. And I want to thank you, and also, one thing that I always say about the borough president—a lot of what we do is not about party affiliation, it's about getting things done for our people, and here is an example of bipartisanship that I hope the people of this city appreciate, because I think they want this from us, they want us to cross across every line to just get things done, and with the borough president's help, we've been able to get to this day. Borough President Jimmy Oddo.

[Borough President James Oddo speaks]

Mayor: Thank you, thank you. I want both of our assembly members to come up, I wanted to hear from both of them—because remember, it was a long fight to get the resources that New York City deserved from Albany. Matt Titone and Mike Cusick fought that fight with us, we prevailed, and this is the result of that noble struggle. Assembly Members Matt Titone and Mike Cusick.

[Assemblymember Matt Titone speaks]

[Assemblymember Mike Cusick speaks]

Mayor: Now, we're going to take some questions on topic, and then some questions off topic, but first, I want to say, Chirlane and I – as many of you know, this is our last year as public school parents. We dropped off Dante for first day of senior year of high school. So, to all the parents out there who are beginning the journey, we envy you. We envy you, we thank you. This isn't going to work without you. Parents are—I always say, parents are the first and last teachers of our children—and we want this pre-k effort to be the beginning of a rich, deep relationship between our parents and our educators, for the long-term good of our kids. Let's applaud all these parents and thank them for being a part of this. With that, to our friends in the media, we will do on-topic, followed by off-topic. On topic?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I don't know if that's true, but continue.

Question: [inaudible] why is that that you did that? Did you wait for the journalists, and why [inaudible]?

Mayor: We definitely – we left at the same time as the journalists.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Marcia, Chirlane and I speak from experience on this. Chiara and Dante had full-day pre-k at PS 372 in Brooklyn. I literally remember it like it was yesterday – this is my warning to the parents, it will feel like it was yesterday when you get to the end of this road. I remember deeply the day we brought Chiara to pre-k for the first time, the day we brought Dante to pre-k for the first time. What happened, literally within weeks, is you could see them growing, before your eyes, a vocabulary, alphabet, numbers, colors – everything started to move in the right direction. And we saw with our children that full-day pre-k gave them that strong foundation, and really propelled them forward through everything else that came after. We're blessed to have two wonderful children who do great in school, who are focused and committed to their future. I don't think there's any accident here. I think they had the strong foundation they needed. So, I believe fundamentally that what we're doing today will be felt in this city – not only a decade from now, two decades from now, three decades from now – as we have more kids graduating high school on time, more kids getting into college, more kids going to work productively, more kids with the skills they need for the 21st century economy. We're planting seeds today that will fully blossom two decades from now, and it will be for the betterment of this city. Thank you, Cardinal. If you like it, I like it. [Laughs] On topic, before we go to off. On topic. On topic going once, on topic – yes, Melissa.

Question: How many [inaudible] have gotten seats [inaudible]?

Mayor: With – let me separate – the nine centers that we determined, because of health and safety and other issues, would not be able to open this year – that's about 265 kids. More than half have now been placed in other programs, and were able to go right into those programs. We're still working on about 100 plus to find the right location. But that's literally happening as we speak. So far, the momentum's been very good. On the children in the 36 centers that are delayed, an update for everyone – of those 36, now we know that at least 14 will open on Monday. So, basically we lost two school days. We'll make it during the year. We'll have more later in the afternoon on how that is progressing. What we have found is, the vast majority of parents we've reached want to wait. We've told them it could be a few days, maybe a few weeks – they want to wait. A smaller number, less than 100, have asked to be put into other programs, and they've been immediately enrolled in other programs. I saw another hand – Beth?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Sure. As I've said, our profound commitment is to the health and safety of our children. Chirlane and I have thought about this the same way we thought about the pre-k that Dante and Chiara went to. We are holding that exact same standard for this administration. It has to be good enough that every one of us would send our own children there happily. So, health and safety considerations have come first, that's why we've made some of these moves in terms of some of the programs that are not moving forward. As to the contracts, about 40 more have come in since last week, and been provided to the comptroller. That will continue. Again, the history is, in the DOE, going back years with pre-k and other programs, that many contracts took a period of time after the beginning of school to get completed, but we're doing that steadily, so 40 more in the last week, and I think you'll see a steady clip from that point on. On topic, yes.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: We are very confident that everything has been well organized. Look at these numbers – over 50,000 kids starting full-day pre-k successfully today. We have over 30,000 more than this same time last year. That was put together on basically six months notice, with great partnership – with the archdiocese, and a lot of other partners, and obviously our DOE. That's an incredible achievement. Everyone who's been a part of it deserves

praise. The number of sites that are being worked on is a small number – 36 compared to over 1,700 that opened on time without any incident. So, I think it's quite clear that all of our schools – our public schools, our catholic schools – have their act together. And the few places where there are problems, they're being worked on quickly, and there's been a lot of communications with parents. I think it's self-evident. And I think it's time for people who want to be constructive to work with us on solving problems and moving forward, instead of just finding criticisms for no particular reason. On topic.

Question: [inaudible] issues [inaudible]?

Mayor: We've had our enrollment specialists out at the sites that had either delayed openings, or that we've determined can't be opened this year. Very few parents appeared at the sites, because the vast majority had been reached in advance. Again, that basic formula I described earlier – lots of parents who are in the nine sites that won't open have already accepted new placements. That's moving ahead. A lot of the ones who are in the delayed sites would rather just wait for that opening – they know it's not too far off, and they're willing to stick with the one they have. So, so far that pattern's been holding. But, you know, again, I want to emphasize – and please, our friends in the media, amplify this – any parent with a question, any parent with a need, any parent looking to make a move – call 3-1-1 and they will be connected to an enrollment specialist specifically versed in pre-k.

Question: [inaudible] today [inaudible] already knew that was delayed?

Mayor: No, what we do know today, different from yesterday, is we can guarantee that 14 of the 36 will open on Monday, and that number could grow. Last call, on topic. Yes.

Question: I know you spoke about your personal feelings about Chiara and Dante [inaudible] just looking broadly at the city [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yes.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: We're feeling a lot. Again, it's a complicated day. It's Dante's birthday also today – it's all happening at once.

Audience Member: Happy birthday, Dante!

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you. Dante is 17 today.

Audience Member: Hallelujah!

Mayor: Amen. So, first day of school, for the last time for us. So, that's the first thing we're feeling is, you know, something very personal. But Chirlane, when she spoke at the previous press conference, started to tear up, and it was both the bittersweet feelings we have as parents, as Dante starts his last year of school – but it was also exactly because of what you asked – this was an idea, this was a dream. We all know how many times a great vision doesn't come to fruition. What we've found here that made this different is the people wanted it. The people demanded it. So, Chirlane and I knew from years of being parents, and from talking to our fellow parents, that everyone believed pre-k would make a huge difference. And when we went to Albany, we found an upsurge that was different than a lot of other issues, because we knew that our elected officials in Albany were hearing from the grassroots, and it became clearer and clearer that this could happen. And then it came down to a lot of great people in our public schools, and our catholic schools, and other systems – saying, whatever it took, we're going to get it done. So it's an amazing feeling. You know, this is – this is the little

engine that could, here. This is a moment where – I think I would aptly use the phrase that the doubting thomases were proven wrong, and hopes won out over fears.

On topic, Marcia.

Question: [inaudible]

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Something about sending your youngest –

Mayor: Sending your youngest to school for the last time.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Marcia, I have – I have no words for the experience. It's – there's nothing like sending your not-so-little boy to school for his last first day of public school. It's an amazing, very emotional experience for me. And it's bittersweet. It's bittersweet, and I'm just so happy to be part of this moment, which is a huge victory – a huge victory for the children as individuals, a victory for families, a victory for our communities and teachers. I think everyone wins. So, that little bit of sadness I feel about saying, you know, goodbye to these days of sending off our own children to school, is balanced out – well-balanced – by this momentous occasion, of more than 50,000 children going to pre-k for the first time. It's wonderful.

Mayor: Thank you.

[Applause]

Before we take off-topic questions, I just want to recognize, the Cardinal and I, and the first lady, were in Ms. C.C.'s classroom – Ms. C.C., take a bow. Well done. All I can say to the – to our friends in the media, if you want a great example of a pre-k teacher, talk to Ms. C.C.. She is all enthusiasm, and she's devoted herself to our youngest kids, and you can tell. So, thank you so much.

Corie Caccese: Thank you very much. It was a really great time. Thank you.

[Applause]

Mayor: Okay. Off-topic. Off-topic.

Question: Did you have a different commute with Dante, did you drive him to school?

Mayor: We did.

Question: Is it much longer?

Mayor: It's longer. It's longer for sure, something we'll have to get used to. But, you know, again, for Chirlane and I, it was a very powerful moment. And, you know, what I'm going to try and do, is whenever I can drop off Dante to school, I want to. It won't happen every day, but whenever I can, I want to, because it's – you know, first of all, I'm going to miss it so much. You know, we remember what it was like to take them to school when they were really small, you know, and every day we would encourage them, and reassure them, and now, you know, Dante's just ready to dive in, obviously, and – but it's still a chance to be with him each day, and I'm quite clear that in a year, he'll be somewhere else, and we won't have that morning time together.

Question: How long was the commute?

Mayor: About 30 minutes.

Question: And what was it before?

Mayor: About 15.

Question: Hi, I have an on topic question.

Mayor: Please.

Question: I was wondering if you thought that there was any difference in expanded pre-k between the various boroughs, and if there were any difficulties in particular on Staten Island?

Mayor: No, I think things have gone really well on Staten Island, in terms of pre-k expansion, and I again want to thank the cardinal and his whole team, who have been extraordinary, and played a big role in our Staten Island effort. I think what we've found is a pretty consistent experience across the boroughs. We had some parts of the city – we've said this many times – where we knew we just didn't have the space we ideally wanted to – Central Queens is an example—and that we're going to have to do a lot more work for next year to get up to full capacity, but that's obviously an area where there's a lot of overcrowding in schools already, so it wasn't a surprise. But in general around the city, we found a high level of demand, and that things have gone smoothly. So where we've had some specific sites with problems, it's really been pretty individual. Off-topic or any topic?

Question: Mr. Mayor, there's a report the NYPD is going to release today the findings about the usability for body cameras, [inaudible] program. Can you tell us what you expect to see, and your reaction?

Mayor: Well, I'll let the commissioner go into the details. My point is, Commissioner Bratton and I fully believe that this pilot is very important. We all agreed to it, as part of the settlement of the Floyd lawsuit. We believe it's something very promising. But, it's a pilot for a reason. I want to emphasize this. Other places that are using the cameras are in much smaller, less complicated circumstances. New York City—you know, just the data storage alone is a huge challenge on this kind of scale. The confidentiality issues are a huge challenge. So, we've got a lot to sort out, but we think this is a promising pilot, and we're undertaking it wholeheartedly.

Question: Can you give a sense of the scale [inaudible]?

Mayor: It conforms with the original settlement. I think it's five precincts. And again, we're going to do this deliberately, we're going to make sure we can support the pilot with each step, so I think it's going to be a series of deliberate steps seeing how far we can take it. Any topic? Yes.

Question: On topic, good morning to you.

Mayor: Good morning.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Hold on one second, I know the cardinal has to leave, I apologize, I don't know if anyone has a question for the cardinal before he goes—going once, going twice. All right, thank you so much. Thank you. Okay, back to this question.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: No, no, we've actually had a really great response from teachers. You know, Chancellor Fariña – I mean one thing that we've found over and over again – Chancellor Fariña is the general of the army. And the troops respect their general because she's done it all. She was a renowned teacher. She was a renowned principal. You know, she's a product of this system, and the first chancellor in a generation who started out as a New York City public school teacher. So, there's tremendous respect and she – throughout her career – has talked about the importance of teacher training and ongoing teacher training. You know, I always say, in

anything we care about – if you think about an airline pilot or anybody else who plays an important role in our society – we want them – a doctor – we want them constantly trained and updated. We need the same for our teachers. Teachers have responded enthusiastically. They want to be on the cutting edge. They want to continue to deepen their skills. And this contract allows the time to do it right, so I think it's gotten a very good response.

Question: [inaudible] David Paterson [inaudible] criticized Zephyr Teachout [inaudible] Republicans [inaudible]?

Mayor: Look, I – first of all, I support Governor Cuomo, and I support Kathy Hochul, and – I think, again, we got so much done in Albany this last year. We're going to do a lot more when they prevail, and there's a very powerful agenda ahead – minimum wage, public financing of elections, Women's Equality Act, DREAM Act. So, I'm very clear about that. I mean – I can't conjecture about the internal motivations of one candidate toward another. I can tell you, if you look at Rob Astorino's record, and the things he's said – this is not a Rockefeller Republican. This is a pretty extremist right-wing Republican. And I think it's very important that we not allow that kind of voice to prevail in New York State. So, that's why I'm adamantly and energetically supporting Governor Cuomo and Kathy Hochul.

Question: Mr. Mayor, some folks yesterday said the move by the St. Patrick's parade committee – their actions were progress, but insufficient. Are you calling on them to include, or allow, Irish gay groups to march, have you given more thought to whether or not you would like to march?

Mayor: First of all, this is an issue over 20 years old. I remember vividly when this began. This is truly progress. I want to be very, very clear, because I have historical perspective here. This is important progress, and very promising. But we still have to know more. We have not yet had the opportunity to talk to the parade organizers. We haven't had the opportunity to talk to a lot of the groups representing the community. We need to know more. I believe in inclusion. I believe in fully inclusive activities and events all over New York City. That's what this administration believes in. So, a big step forward, but we need to know more before I can tell you how we're going to handle next March. And obviously, we have time. Any topic. Choose a topic, any topic.

Question: [inaudible] Daily News had done a story about [inaudible] the number, that it was sort of being used in minority neighborhoods more, and, you know, I'm wondering if there's been any developments on that, if you thought about how it would be distributed more equally?

Mayor: Well, a couple things. I think what we've seen, over the last weeks, is a beginning of a better understanding of the broken windows theory is. And I just want to state it, because I think it's important, you know, there was – one of the papers had an interview with George Kelling, who's co-author of the original article that the theory came from, and he said very simply, this remembering the 1980s in New York City, the quite vivid example he gave – if one window is broken in a building and nothing is done, all the other windows will eventually be broken. And I think it became a way of saying, if we don't have responsive policing, we're not going to be able to keep people safe. If we don't go after some of the small problems, they will turn into bigger problems. If we don't go after some of the small offenders, we may miss the fact, that in fact, they're carrying a weapon, or they have other criminal history. So, the theory is very sound, but it has to be constantly updated, and adjusted for the times we're in. For example, today, one of the biggest initiatives that's part of the broken windows effort is Vision Zero. A lot of energy is going into going after reckless motorists. That was not as true 10 or 20 years ago. That being said, it has to be applied fairly and equally. Commissioner Bratton and I are absolutely committed to this. So, I don't want to talk about one set of statistics or another, because we all know that statistics can be, from time to time, misleading. We're going to apply the law equally. We want people in every community to know they're going to be treated fairly. We have more work to do. That is part of the retraining process that Commissioner Bratton has initiated with every member of the NYPD. And give us a little time, and I think you're going to see what was clear in that poll the other day – New Yorkers across every

demographic want responsive policing. They want safety. They want to know, when they call, the police will be there. Obviously, they also want to make sure it's fair and consistent, and that's what we're going to achieve. Michael.

Question: You went to so many candidate forums last year –

Mayor: Yes, I did, Michael.

Question: Do you believe that –

Mayor: 70, I think it was!

Question: [inaudible] debates are important are important in a democracy –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: – and do you have any qualms about the fact that we're about to have a Democratic gubernatorial primary, and there is actually not going to be a single [inaudible] debate?

Mayor: I think, in the end, each candidate has to decide how they want to comport themselves. I believe that the forums – although at times, a challenging experience – were an important part of the dialogue. And I was very comfortable being a part of all those forums and debates. But every candidate has to decide for themselves.

Question: [inaudible] criticism [inaudible] dedicating his time to charity? Just wondering what your take [inaudible] ex-mayor going back to the media world?

Mayor: I don't think there's any issue with it. I think, you know, obviously I have not heard his specific vision of why he's making this move, but I give him credit – look, he's done a lot philanthropically over the years. Obviously, I've had my differences with him, but I really do commend him for what he has done since leaving the mayoralty. I happened to be in Washington for a part of the Africa Summit. Mayor Bloomberg played a very important role in putting together the resources, and getting business people to agree to make investments in Africa. I thought that was noble. I think the work he's doing against gun violence is important. So, I think he's devoted himself to very important causes, and if he's made the personal decision to resume his business, that certainly doesn't surprise me, and obviously it's his right.

Phil: Last call, guys.

Mayor: Did I have one over – Marcia.

Question: [inaudible] but you didn't one for Andrew Cuomo, and I'm wondering if that indicates that you were worried more about Kathy Hochul [inaudible] Andrew Cuomo?

Mayor: Well, first of all, you know, I had the honor, – and Chirlane, Dante, Chiara – we all campaigned with Governor Cuomo on Monday on Eastern Parkway, and I look forward to campaigning with him more in both the primary and the general election. I think there's a huge difference. I think Governor Cuomo is as well known as anybody could be in this state, and Kathy Hochul is just being introduced, so clearly I want to put some extra energy and effort into helping to introduce Kathy Hochul to the state. But I am happy and ready to support in any way – the governor needs, or Kathy Hochul needs, in their effort.

Phil: Thank you, everybody.

Mayor: Thanks, everyone.

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