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**FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY JOINS WITH THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE
TO HELP PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**

NEW YORK—*At the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem today, First Lady Chirlane McCray met The Duchess of Cambridge and discussed mental health and child development.*

The First Lady posted the following on her blog, FLO.NYC:

Promoting Mental Health Awareness, with Help from The Duchess

Today I had the honor of hosting The Duchess of Cambridge on a visit to the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem. The Duchess has made mental health one of her signature issues, and I share her passion for helping those who are struggling to regain their equilibrium. How deeply rewarding it was to introduce her to this organization, which has been providing crucial mental health services for children since 1946!

During our visit, we met with three heroically resilient young people and their families. Although each story was different, there were common threads. All of the children had experienced poverty and instability, and all of them had struggled with communication. One boy described how anxious and fearful he used to be. Another told us that he used to express himself with his fists instead of his words.

At Northside, the children learn coping skills designed to help them process their emotions without hurting themselves or others. The young lady in the group showed us the homemade stress balls she created using flour and balloons. She was also a huge fan art therapy, including origami, dance and drawing.

But coping skills alone are not enough. Northside employs a holistic approach that engages family members and the larger community to create a supportive infrastructure around the child. The adults in the room kept using the word “transformation,” and they weren’t just talking about their children – it was clear that the big people were learning a lot from the little people.

Sadly, our society continues to portray mental illness as rare and shameful, when in fact it is prevalent and nothing to be embarrassed about. Researchers estimate that one in four American adults suffers from a mental illness in any given year; depression and anxiety are most common. And our children are not immune – approximately 13 percent of children between the ages of 8 and 15 had a diagnosable mental disorder within the previous year.

The statistics add up to this: Nearly all of us, at some time in our life, will confront mental health concerns. Maybe it will be a member of your family. Maybe it will be a friend or co-worker. Or maybe it will be you.

Unfortunately, far too many New Yorkers are alone in their struggle. That's why organizations like the Northside Center are so important. And that's why I'm grateful to count The Duchess as a partner in helping us to change the public conversation about mental health. There is so much we can do to help people – especially our children – get the support they need. But first, we have to talk about it.

<http://flo.nyc/post/104709225479/promoting-mental-health-awareness-with-help-from>

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