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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE PRINCE  
JOSHUA AVITTO COMMUNITY CENTER RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you. This is a very moving day. This is a very moving day for a lot of reasons and I'm just going to talk for a moment about that because I think we're all feeling a lot today and we're feeling a lot of solidarity with this good family today. But I want to just reflect on how many people came together to make this happen. And they say success has many mothers and fathers, and they say it takes a village.

Here is a great example of a lot of people stepping up to honor this family, to honor this community, to do something that would make a change, to do something for the hundreds and thousands of young children today and in the future, for the Prince Joshua's we will get to know, the young people who will be here and will be our future who will experience this. This will be the environment they learn and grow in, that they will enjoy, they will feel empowered by.

So in terms of this success, Council member Inez Barron deserves some very special credit.

[Applause]

I want to tell you exactly what happened from my perspective. Council member Barron called me, Council member Barron saw me at meeting, pulled me aside, then she called me again, then she called me again, then she pulled me aside again, then she reminded me, then she exhorted me. I could not go anywhere in Brooklyn without finding Council member Barron around the corner.

[Applause]

And she said three beautiful and powerful words every time – Prince Joshua Avitto.

[Applause]

So, Council member, we, without saying as much, we formed a pact because we both knew we had to get there but we'd only be here – the only reason we ultimately got here despite all that

history that you heard from AT that had to be overcome was because of the sheer persistence of Council member Inez Barron. Thank you.

[Applause]

To my colleague of long standing, Assembly member Charles Barron, I just want to say as you were speaking you reminded me of a phrase from my upbringing. You and I both remember with some fondness the 60s and the 70s and the culture and the movements of the time. So I want to say about the Assembly member – what you see is what you get.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

And that's a compliment. I want to thank the leaders who are here because they care about this and because they have each contributed in their own way to this progress, of course, our DA, Eric Gonzalez, thank you and thank you for what you have done for this family and your whole team.

[Applause]

Council member Jumaane Williams, is he still here? I saw him over there. Council member, thank you for your support.

[Applause]

I want to thank people in City government for whom this is also a labor of love and making this victorious. Making this center all it could be is a labor of love. I want to thank Eric Cumberbatch from my office who has done so much to support this community.

[Applause]

I want to thank the new General Manager of the Housing Authority, Vito Mustaciuolo, who is committed to this center. Thank you, Vito.

[Applause]

And then to have – to have involved in this beautiful center two organizations that are literally two of the best in New York City, Man Up! is a difference-maker for this community.

[Applause]

And everybody who is a part of Man Up! I want to commend you. It is our honor – the City of New York supports, not just with words, with resources the work of Man Up! because it makes a huge difference and saves lives.

[Applause]

And I commend everyone who is part of Man Up! but I want to give a special thank you to Andre T. Mitchell for your leadership which has been outstanding.

[Applause]

And the other great organization – and I have watched their work on behalf of children for decades – is Good Shepherd Services.

[Applause]

Don't mess around with Sister Paulette LoMonico –

[Applause]

– Because if you stand in her way, she will contact God directly.

[Laughter]

So, Sister, thank you. Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, our former Deputy Mayor, now on the board of Good Shepherd. Thank you for your great work as well.

[Applause]

We are feeling a celebration of something good but every one of us can take ourselves back four years ago. Every one of us can remember what we felt when we heard what happened to Prince Joshua Avitto. There are some moments in this city that everybody feels. There's 8.6 million of us. It's hard to imagine everybody feeling something at once but there are moments, sometimes, we all feel together.

And the notion that such a good and sweet young man could be taken from us, dripped all of us together in pain, in shock. This was a moment when this city was united and we all felt that Prince Joshua was our child too.

And we all felt an obligation to support this family and we saw what an extraordinary family it was. And, Aricka, your strength is absolutely amazing. I want to thank you.

[Applause]

Every time I saw you I could feel there was such deep pain but there was resolve for your whole family but also you knew that what you were doing gave hope to everyone because you were so strong, so amazing in a moment of pain. I just got to say, you have my ultimate admiration, Aricka.

[Applause]

And I also say on behalf of everyone in this city, thank God that Mikayla Capers survived.

[Applause]

Thank God we will all get to see what that young woman will become, and all she will contribute to this society. And thank God she was part of bringing justice for Prince Joshua Avitto.

[Applause]

And to PJ's father, Nicholas, to his step-father, Josf, to his brother, Nicholas, to the whole family – we remain by your side and committed to supporting this family. And I have to say I'm standing here in awe of the notion that PJ Avitto's name will mean something to generation after generation.

[Applause]

Think about this. Think about what this community achieved. This community – so strong – so wronged for so many decades, and yet so strong. So many sought to divide and yet so unified. This community created something that now will speak of love and hope because hundreds and then thousands of young people will come through these doors and will be elevated, will be strengthened. They will see that name and it will give them hope.

When they say to a parent or a grandparent or an aunt or an uncle, "I'm going to the PJ Avitto Center," everyone will feel that is a step in the right direction for that young person. So, out of the pain and out of the tragedy something that will actually uplift hundreds and ultimately thousands.

This is also a tribute to all that is good and strong about East New York. And I want to just conclude on that point. A community has been through so much but there is a particular kind of honor and resiliency that I see in this community. I've seen it for a long time.

It is no surprise to me that an organization as extraordinary as Man Up! grew here in this community. And even if it is not celebrated, this community has never been celebrated the way it deserves and its organizations and its institutions have never been given their due but you know what people here understood. People here believed, and the spirit of this community is visible right here in this beautiful place today.

[Applause]

Council member, that's something we call self-determination and it's a very good thing. I commend everyone. And Erika, we are with you. We love you and God bless you.

[Applause]

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