



## **COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED YOUTH MEMBERS ARE WAITING ON THEIR MOMENT**

### ***Annual Youth Conference helps at-risk youth identify and grasp better options***

**Elizabeth, NJ – August 23, 2013** – A moment can be a lifetime. That was the message of Romane Paul, keynote speaker at the 2013 Annual Youth Conference hosted by the Transitional Opportunities Program of Community Access Unlimited (CAU). The theme of this year's conference was Just Waiting on Your Moment yet Paul spoke about how living your moment can translate into a lifetime of rewards.

CAU provides support programs and services to people with disabilities and youth served under the Department of Children and Families to enable them to live independently in the community, in areas including housing, vocational and life-skills training, education, advocacy and recreation.

The annual Youth Conference brings together at-risk youth from throughout the state and provides them with a day of workshops and events to unite and teach them, according to Julia Leftwich, CAU's director of shelter services. This year's conference drew 159 youth and 32 adults who work with young people.

"What we wanted them to get out of the conference is that there is more to life than what they have gone through to this point," Leftwich said. "Success is right around the corner."

Paul is a motivational speaker and leadership strategist who visits schools and youth organizations to positively impact the lives of young people. He also is a former eighth grade teacher who taught in East Harlem.

He spoke about Oprah Winfrey, one of the world's leading media moguls and philanthropists, and Jay-Z, a leading rap artist, record producer and entrepreneur, who overcame troubled youths to live their moment, seize their passions and achieve lifelong success.

However, a person does not need to be rich or famous to have succeeded in living their moment, Paul told the audience. He advised them to find a purpose for contributing to the world, have a passion for something in life and surround themselves with people who matter.

"It has everything to do with you deciding I'm ready to live in my moment," he said.

The conference workshops were designed to help attendees do that, according to Leftwich. They comprised Man Up, Girl Talk and Next Steps to Success to teach the attendees about being successful, Let's Talk About Sex and Substance Abuse Awareness. Listen Up Staff was a workshop for adults who work with youth.

"I got a lot out of it," said CAU member Deja Benjamin. "We did a lot of workshops about empowerment, job seeking and aging out. I thought the keynote speaker was really good. When he was talking about our purpose in life he wasn't there to change us, just to help us do things in life.

"You have to come wanting to change and wanting to be a better person. You have to know what your goals are and want you want out of life and that is what this conference is about, empowering ourselves."

### **Photo below**

#### **About CAU**

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary, supports people with special needs in achieving real lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives a voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. CAU serves more than 5,000 individuals each year. For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.

Photo – CAU Youth Conference 3



Romane Paul, a motivational speaker and leadership strategist who visits schools and youth organizations, speaks at the 2013 Annual Youth Conference hosted by the Transitional Opportunities Program of Community Access Unlimited.