

Pro Football Hall of Fame, Meridian Health of Michigan and Community Leaders from Lansing Stand Up for Students' Mental Health at 'Strong Youth Strong Communities' Summits - Sep. 26, 2023

*Hall of Fame athletes shared life experiences and methods for success with more than 600 high school students across Lansing*

DETROIT, Sept. 26, 2023 [PRNewswire/](#) -- Meridian, a Michigan-based provider of government-sponsored health plans and wholly owned subsidiary of [Centene Corporation](#), and the Pro Football Hall of Fame (PFHOF) hosted '[Strong Youth Strong Communities](#)' (SYSC) Summits at Lansing's Everett High School and Eastern High School on Tuesday, September 26. Led by Hall of Famers Darrell Green, Steve Hutchinson and Isaac Bruce, and former UNC Women's Basketball player Iman McFarland, SYSC is based on the premise that investing in today's youth can yield generational returns and positively impact current and future communities. The youth summits kicked off with remarks by Lansing Mayor Andy Schor and attracted more than 600 teens from both high schools.

Michigan, like many other states, is experiencing an alarming surge of behavioral and mental health crisis among school-aged students. The summit focused on the students' emotional and mental wellbeing and the pro athletes shared with the students their real-life stories, life lessons and methods for success.

"Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year-olds in Michigan, and the rates are nearly double in rural communities. Meridian is committed to helping reduce the teen and youth suicide rates through meaningful local partnerships and providing youths in both urban and rural communities opportunities to feel heard, seen, understood and supported as they discuss the challenges most important to them," said Plan President and CEO of Meridian, Patty Graham. "We are honored to work with the PFHOF and our community partners to have these honest conversations with Lansing students to reduce the stigma and help students prioritize their mental health."

The youth summit featured interactive breakout sessions, where attendees discussed what they face in school, communities, family and issues that are important to them. Those discussions provided an opportunity for the students to connect with each other as well as the guests from the PFHOF.

"Growing up today can be rough and present trying moments that our youth must face. Difficult situations at home or at school, combined with social isolation or trauma of different kinds can create mental health challenges," said Pro Football Hall of Famer, Darrell Green. "It's so important to inform these young people that they are not alone as they navigate these obstacles. And to provide them with the resources and strategies to help them thrive."

"Leadership skills are paramount no matter the endeavor that a young person tackles," said Pro Football Hall of Famer, Steve Hutchinson. "I am always excited to connect with our youth about how to lead, including taking ownership over mental health."

PFHOF and Meridian partnered with Lansing Promise, Lansing Public School District, City of Lansing, Allen Neighborhood Center, Boys and Girls Clubs of Lansing and Sodexo Magic to speak directly with the students about the challenges that area youth are facing and discuss the resources that are available to help them overcome adversity. To further the impact of summits, Lansing Promise, a scholarship program offering tuition assistance for post-secondary (college or skilled trade) education to all eligible high school graduates within the Lansing School District boundaries, will work with Meridian and PFHOF to convene community partners in Lansing to provide the resources needed to create a lasting impact on the mental wellbeing of youth in the area.

"At the Lansing Promise, we believe in the inherent worth of every young person in this city. And we know that everyone faces trials, traumas and hardships in life. Which means that mental health is real, it is important and it is worth talking about. Our future scholars are calling on the adults in our community to be honest, to be open and to be real. It's time we do just that," said Lansing Promise Executive Director, Justin Sheehan.

#### **About Strong Youth Strong Communities**

SYSC is a nationwide campaign led by Centene Corporation, in partnership with the Pro Football Hall of Fame, national non-profit organizations, and local community service providers to bring teens together to learn life and leadership skills that help unlock their potential. To learn more, please visit [www.strongystrongc.com](http://www.strongystrongc.com).

#### **About the Pro Football Hall of Fame**

Located in Canton, Ohio, the birthplace of the National Football League, the Pro Football Hall of Fame is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit institution with the Mission to Honor the Greatest of the Game, Preserve its History, Promote its Values, & Celebrate Excellence Together.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. AAM accreditation is national recognition for the museum's commitment to excellence and the highest professional standards of museum operation and public service.

Hundreds of thousands of fans from across the globe travel to Canton annually to experience an inspirational, interactive

museum that chronicles America's most popular sport. Fans can also enjoy the Hall of Fame Store at the Hall, and online at [www.profootballhof.com/store](http://www.profootballhof.com/store), for merchandise from all 32 NFL clubs plus the Hall of Fame. Proceeds from the Store support the Hall's Mission.

#### **About Meridian Health**

Meridian in Michigan provides government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors, and individuals with complex medical needs primarily through Medicaid (Meridian), Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (Wellcare), Medicare-Medicaid Plans (MeridianComplete), and the Health Insurance Marketplace (Ambetter from Meridian). Meridian is a wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation, a leading healthcare enterprise committed to transforming the health of the communities it serves, one person at a time. For more information about Meridian, please visit [mimeridian.com](http://mimeridian.com).

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