



## PHOTOS SPEAK M1



Photos positively represent PS22 Chorus

# PS22 CHORUS: VOICES OF ENCOURAGEMENT

**IMAGINE**

...you are part of a group of kids looking to encourage a teacher who has cancer. She is still dedicated to her students and working tirelessly every day at school.

This happened at Public School 22 (PS22) in New York City. It involved 60 kids in a fifth-grade choir and fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Lopez. Mrs. Lopez was a new teacher who put her heart into her job. Most days she came early and left late. When she found out about her cancer, she didn't want to stop teaching. She scheduled her treatments for after school and spent as much time with her class as possible.

Mr. Breinberg was the director of the PS22 Chorus. Every year he chose 60-70 fifth-grade students to become that year's choir. Over the years, the PS22 Chorus has sung with many musical superstars. They even performed at the Academy Awards. What touches people about their singing is the emotion they bring to their songs.

Mr. Breinberg saw Mrs. Lopez's commitment to her students and he wanted to encourage her during her treatments. He said, "She's one of the unsung heroes, and it was time for her to be sung to." Mr. Breinberg knew that life could be tough for his students, too. He knew that encouraging Mrs. Lopez would make the students feel good and help them address their own challenges. To be most encouraging for Mrs. Lopez, he suggested the students express their feelings by moving to the music.

The choir sang Martina McBride's song "I'm Gonna Love You Through It." The song is about a husband who comforts and encourages his wife throughout her cancer treatment. Mr. Breinberg changed some words to fit Mrs. Lopez. Then the PS22 Chorus sang to her:

*"I know that you're afraid and I am, too  
 But you'll never be alone, I promise you"*

As soon as she heard the words, Mrs. Lopez began crying. The encouragement she felt from the students touched her deeply. She

said later, "I hope others see how young kids really support you in any way they can."

As they sang to Mrs. Lopez, some singers clasped their hands to their hearts, others closed their eyes and many swayed to the music. At one point they raised pink flowers in the air for her. They sang:

*When you're weak, I'll be strong  
 When you let go, I'll hold on*

Over and over the students sang the last line of the song:

*I'm gonna love you through it*

Mrs. Lopez dabbed both eyes with a tissue. Through her tears, she said, "Thank you boys and girls. Thank you so much. It means a lot to me."

When the choir sang to Mrs. Lopez she was encouraged. She said, "It's not easy, but I will get through this because I have wonderful friends at this school." Like the PS22 fifth-grade choir, how can you encourage others as you write your own best *True Success*<sup>™</sup> Lifestory?

## QUESTIONS LEAD TO UNDERSTANDING M2/5

1. What were the circumstances that led the PS22 Chorus to encourage Mrs. Lopez?

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2. What evidence is there that the PS22 Chorus encouraged Mrs. Lopez?

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3. What impact did the Chorus' attempt at encouraging Mrs. Lopez have? How can you learn from the kids in PS22 Chorus and encourage people you know?

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