



DJJ residents in secure detention participate in "Build Your Own Dream School" program.

Bridges Juvenile Center sponsors **"Build Your Own Dream School" Program**

On Tuesday, September 29, Bridges Juvenile Center sponsored the "Build Your Own Dream School" event. The product of a collaboration between First Deputy Commissioner Judith Pincus and Director of Programs Sonia Galarza, the "Build Your Own Dream School" program was designed to allow residents to demonstrate their creativity and originality.

The competition began with an address by Dr. Divine Pryor Deputy Executive Director of the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions at Medgar Evers College, a renowned criminologist and lecturer on the criminal justice. Dr. Pryor addressed the residents and emphasized the importance of education, speaking about obstacles and challenges he had to overcome, and how education played a major role in becoming a successful professional.

During the two-day competition, residents were involved in creating their own dream school under the guidance and coaching of the staff assigned to them. In each dorm, residents collaboratively discussed and designed such things as the name, the logo, mascot, and subjects that would be taught in their dream school. They also developed a student handbook, cafeteria menu and exterior design for the dream school.

All the designed schools were then displayed in the Multi-Purpose Room where each dormitory had the opportunity to present their creations in front of a panel of judges, consisting of Ms. Naima Rock, Special Programs Assistant, Ms. Susana Hermione from SOBRO (a community-based organization), and Mr. Ralph Simmons, the Ombudsman. As each dorm arrived at the multi-purpose room, staff introduced them to the judges and 2 or 3 residents from each group presented their ideas for the dream school. The presentations included every detail and concept idea of their plans.

Throughout the two-day exercise, there was excitement and anticipation over which dormitory would be chosen as the winner. The judges took their roles very seriously, as it was apparent that the residents put a lot of thought and hard work into their presentations.

Special Programs Assistant Naima Rock stated, "I was very impressed by the talents of our residents, the creativity they displayed and the professionalism of their presentations." All the dorms participated in the competition. When the selections were made for "Best Overall Dream School," Dorm B-3 was named the First Place Winner, Second Place went to residents in the Infirmary Unit, and Third Place went to A-4. Ribbons were also presented to Dorm A-3, B-4 and A-4 for the "Best Built School." All other dorms received recognition for their projects.

Residents at Bridges weren't the only ones to take part in the exciting program. "Build Your Own Dream School" competitions were also held at Horizon and Crossroads Juvenile Centers, as well as in SEEDS group homes.

