

Juvenile Justice Report

The official newsletter of the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor | Neil Hernandez, Commissioner



Crossroads Residents Stage Adaptation of 'Topdog/Underdog' Passages Academy Sponsors Student Production of Pulitzer Prize Winning Play

On February 17th, 38 Passages Academy students at Crossroads Juvenile Center performed an elaborate stage adaptation of the Suzan-Lori Parks work 'Topdog/Underdog.' The production was part of a two play project that included "Hamlet" and focused on an exploration of identity.

With a cast of 18 student actors and dancers and 20 student costumers and set designers, the residents entertained and inspired an audience of more than 120 fellow residents, staff and special guests.

Throughout the performance, the actors assumed the identities of several historical figures, ranging from Presidents and foreign leaders, to champions of civil rights and personalities from the world of music and popular culture.

During the play, which explores the complex themes of identity, family wounds and healing, audience members observed the enormous creative talent of the play's cast, as *continued on p.2*



Passages Academy students at Crossroads perform an adaptation of Suzan-Lori Parks's Pulitzer Prize winning play, 'Topdog/Underdog'

New Juvenile Counselors, Special Officers & Caseworkers Welcomed at DJJ Spring Graduation Ceremony Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs delivers keynote address to Class of 2006



On Monday, March 13th, the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice welcomed 32 new Juvenile Counselors, Special Officers and Caseworkers during a ceremony and reception commemorating the graduation of the first Class of 2006.

The staff additions, which began last year, are part of the Department's continuing effort to enhance childcare and security.

The event marked the successful completion of training for the new graduates, who have since been *continued on p.4*

Residents Get Oscar-Winning Insight from Hollywood Screenwriter

Crossroads residents were treated to a crash course in succeeding in the movie business on March 8th when Craig Pearce, screenwriter for blockbuster films like 'Moulin Rouge,' 'Strictly Ballroom' and the 1996 re-make of 'Romeo & Juliet,' shared his insights for succeeding in Hollywood.

Pearce, who authored the screenplay for the 2001 film 'Moulin Rouge' that received two Academy Awards, spoke to approximately 50 residents at the Crossroads Juvenile Center. He shared thoughts about his experience in screenwriting, his inspiration, overcoming challenges and other subjects, and answered questions for a very enthusiastic audience of residents and staff members.

Pearce revealed that inspiration for many of his own works has come from experiences in his life and people he has known. He encouraged those interested in pursuing a career in writing to draw on their own experiences for inspiration and subject material, and to be ready for a great deal of rejection.

The screenwriter said that perseverance and determination can make the difference between success and *continued on p.2*

Screenwriter *continued from p.1*

failure. He acknowledged that he was tempted to give up many times along his own professional journey, but believing in himself and staying the course bridged the gap that ultimately produced blockbuster success.

Many of the residents who attended expressed interest in pursuing a career in writing and filmmaking. Mr. Pearce also took the opportunity to review a video of a recent play written, produced and performed by residents.

Pierre, a 17-year old resident, especially enjoyed the visit by Pearce and was inspired to keep writing. The juvenile said, "I didn't know that you might get many rejections and obstacles before making it as a writer and I also didn't know that screenwriters make a lot of money if they're successful."

This young resident, who served as production manager for the student adaptation of 'TopDog/UnderDog', may already be headed down the road toward big screen success. Good luck, Pierre. ■



Screenwriter Craig Pearce discusses his work on 'Moulin Rouge' and 'Strictly Ballroom' with residents at Crossroads Juvenile Center



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Passages Academy Students Receive Presti- gious Silver Key Awards

Two Passages Academy Students at the Crossroads Juvenile Center have been named recipients of the *Scholastic Arts and Writing Silver Key Award* for outstanding artistic talent and ability. The prestigious honor is usually reserved for students from dedicated art schools and is given to fewer than 200 students throughout the City.

The awards presented to residents Marcos and Adam are the first awards ever won by students from District 79.

Commemorative certificates will be mailed to the homes of the residents' parents. A Regional Awards Ceremony was given at the Brooklyn Museum on April 6, 2006.

Both Marcos and Adam were listed as artists of one painting entitled: "The Assassination of Julius Caesar," which was a piece of artwork used in the stage set of a dramatic adaptation of Hamlet by William Shakespeare, performed at Crossroads last December. ■

Topdog/Underdog *continued from p.1*

student actors assumed and interpreted the personas of the numerous characters, employing a broad range of dialog, music and art.

The play itself is an adaptation of 'Topdog/Underdog', a story about two brothers, Booth and Lincoln, who choose to live their lives through the street, learning from each other and at the same time competing with each other for control. It depicts a world full of danger and illusion. Crossroads residents, through their literacy class, adapted the play imagining and performing it through the eyes of Tupac Shakur, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Mahatma Ghandi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others, addressing social issues that affect today's youth.



Passages students in adaptation of 'Topdog/Underdog'

The students spent six weeks planning and preparing the show. Preparations included painting large canvases, dialog rewrites and numerous rehearsals. The show featured original pre-recorded music in the resident's own voices, I-movie footage of the streets of Brooklyn playing as a backdrop to the set, and original artwork on eight 12' x 12' canvases.

Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks wrote the original Pulitzer prize winning play. The Department of Education sponsored the show and Materials for the Arts donated most of the raw supplies use in constructing the set.

Assistant Principal, Ron Carter, and Sean Turner, the Literacy Coordinator of Passages Academy, coordinated the event. ■

Judge Monica Drinane Speaks at DJJ Women's History Ceremony

The Department of Juvenile Justice sponsored a ceremony and reception at St. John's University in honor of Women's History Month on March 27th. Eight DJJ employees recognized as "role models for women in the workplace" received awards at the event.

Sandra Gordon, DJJ's Director of Discipline, served as the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Reverend Damaris F. Hunt Banks, Senior Pastor of the Prince of Peace Baptist Church, provided the invocation.

The Honorable Monica Drinane, Interim Civil Court Judge serving in the New York City Family Court, delivered the keynote address for the event. Judge Drinane spoke of her experience in the judicial system and in dealing with juvenile cases. She read aloud an emotionally moving letter of appreciation she received from a young woman who had appeared before her as a juvenile. The letter expressed thanks for the efforts of the judge and others and detailed positive changes inspired by her experience within the



Judge Monica Drinane delivers keynote during DJJ's Women's History Month ceremony at St. John's University

juvenile justice system that had ultimately changed the direction of her life after leaving detention.

DJJ employees recognized as role models for women in the workplace included:

Bonnie Alvear
Monica Boayke
Chris Love Fox
Dorothy Gamble
Patricia Jerry
Elizabeth Lecour
Kim Noble
Tanya Williams



Patricia Jerry is a role model for women in the workplace

Dorothy Gamble said, "As one gives of themselves unselfishly and with no strings attached, one can rest assured to receive the blessing of good friends multiply back to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

Spring 2006

Commissioner's Message



by
Neil Hernandez

Since the Fall newsletter, much work has been done to continue to enhance the quality of care provided to detained youth.

The Department has completed the process of hiring the 210 new direct childcare staff for secure and non-secure detention. This was no small task and accomplished through the coordinated efforts of staff from throughout the agency, including Operations, Human Resources and Training.

Youth throughout detention are actively engaged in programming provided by seven community-based organizations that is responsive to their needs, including conflict mediation, anger management, gender specific services for girls, and literacy tutorials. The Department is also working with a corporate training organization, which to-date has provided conflict mediation training to about 700 personnel, to help staff to work with detained youth.

In February, the Department launched a new behavior management program, ASPIRE, in the Crossroads and Horizon Juvenile Centers, to benefit young people by promoting social skills.

The Department's efforts to enhance services to youth will continue as the proposed Fiscal Year 2007 Executive Budget adds resources for the Department, including a significant increase in special officers to enhance security in secure detention and additional caseworkers to complement social service delivery to youth. The budget also continues the Adolescent Portable Therapy "(APT)" project, which is helping young people by reducing drug use and risk factors for re-arrest and also has a positive influence on their family life.

As this fiscal year comes to a close, I look forward to the start of another on July 1st where we have the opportunity to continue to make a difference in the lives of the City's young people.

I wish you and your families a safe and enjoyable summer season. ■

Kim Noble, who was also an award recipient said, "I am truly blessed to work with such wonderful people. I was taught by the best. To be recognized as a role model during Women's History Month was an honor." ■

DJJ Celebrates Black History Month



Minister Titus Rich, Jr., MOHIA Executive Director Marjorie Cadogan, Commissioner Hernandez and DOC Imam Umar Abdul-Jalil commemorate Black History Month

Black History Month ended at DJJ with a ceremony and reception that drew employees, family members and friends from all Department facilities.

Marjorie A. Cadogan, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access, delivered the keynote address for the ceremony.

Minister Titus Rich, Jr., who works with the DJJ Volunteer Religious Program at Crossroads, and Imam Umar Abdul-Jalil from the NYC Department of Correction, both provided invocations. DJJ's own Dorothy Gamble sang "The National Anthem."

EEO Director Tonia Haynes said, "The Department's Black History Month ceremony was a meaningful way to recognize and reflect on the continuing contributions of black Americans."

DJJ's BHM ceremony was the culmination of numerous celebrations and activities commemorating Black History Month that took place in Department facilities throughout the month of February. ■

Graduation Ceremony *continued from p.1*

deployed throughout the agency.

The ceremony, which drew nearly 100 agency employees, family members, friends and other special guests, was held in the Saval Auditorium at the Manhattan Campus of St. John's University. A graduate reception was held in the adjoining Trustees Hall of Fame.

Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs delivered the keynote address, noting DJJ's important mission and the critical role each new employee will play in making a positive intervention in the lives of our City's young people.

Graduates were individually recognized and presented with commemorative plaques by Deputy Commissioner Thomas Tsotsoros and Director of Training Stan Helfeld. Deputy Commissioner Carlos A. Serrano delivered commencement remarks and First Deputy Commissioner Judy Pincus provided closing remarks.

"DJJ's Class of 2006 will be a welcome addition to our staff," Deputy Commissioner Thomas Tsotsoros said. "They have an important job to do and they're off to a promising start."

The next graduation ceremony for new employees is set for July 2006. ■

Artist De La Vega visits Bridges Residents

On March 24th, New York City artist James De La Vega paid a visit to Bridges residents to discuss the subject of artistic expression and encourage them to explore and develop their own artistic ability. The presentation was part of the art and

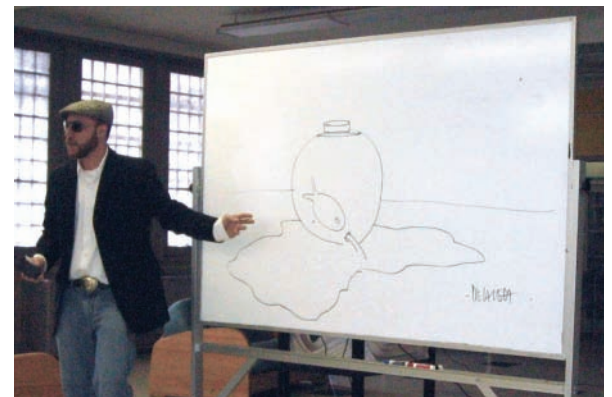
literacy component of the Passages Academy educational curriculum.

De La Vega, who lives and works in New York City's Spanish Harlem (El Barrio), is known for his murals and chalk drawings. His murals can be seen throughout East Harlem, and his chalk drawings for which he became known were usually accompanied by expressions such as "Become Your Dream."

While the police often considered De La Vega's early work graffiti, the artist discussed with his Bridges audience his run-ins with the law and counseled residents against engaging in the defacing of public property.

During the assembly, De La Vega spoke about race, diversity and following one's dreams.

"Passages Academy students were overwhelmed by the famous artist and former teacher," said Assistant Principal Carolyn Peterson. "They were very familiar with his artwork throughout the community and had prepared for the visit by reading literature, writing essays and creating posters." ■



James De La Vega discusses art and expression with residents at Bridges Juvenile Center