

# New Funding For Youths Comes Canarsie's Way

By Marianna Hernandez

Youths in Canarsie and surrounding communities will finally get a chance to boost their education through an array of physical and recreational programming in the next few years.

For the first time in history, the city's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), an agency created in 1996 to advance youth development, has allocated federal funding through Community Service Block Grants (CSBG) to be dispersed through local community boards.

However, Community Board 18 will not be provided with the funds, nor will it have the authority to distribute them, but it will be a part of a compilation of several areas where different organizations, especially nonprofits, have the opportunity to submit proposals to fund their educational programs and brainstorm new ideas.

According to Ryan Dodge, a DYCD spokesman, the central task is to administer budgeted city, state and federal funds to qualified community-based organizations. In collaboration with these local organizations, DYCD provides funding to support a wide range of programs, including the Out-of-School Time (OST) Initiative, the nation's largest munic-

ipally-funded after school program, Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), Community and Neighborhood Development Programs and others. These initiatives are made possible through the issuance of RFPs-Request for Proposals, through which the city agency seeks organizations to be the best community-based candidates to provide qualified services.

"We do not make awards directly to the community boards, however, community residents are invited to read and score proposals," said Dodge.

The grants issued through the RFPs make it possible for DYCD to administer several local programs that are operated by community agencies. CB 18, which encompasses Canarsie, Bergen Beach, Mill Basin, Flatlands and other neighborhoods, maintains volunteer residents who are members of the DYCD Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB).

The NAB utilizes its knowledge of the community and its groups to steer DYCD in the proper direction relating to decisions about how the funds best serve the area and what services to provide.

According to Melissa del Valle Ortiz, a former Canarsie resident and now a community advocate in Sunset

Park, the funding is crucial to schools, such as P.S. 272 with a student population largely made up of children from nearby BayView Houses.

"Most of these children have nowhere to go after school or during the summer. There are no venues for them, because their parents can't afford to send their kids to private programs," said Ortiz. "Programs like the SYEP help teens learn responsibility and not look to the streets as their only outlook."

This fall, DYCD will issue several new RFPs, including proposals for funds to the Neighborhood Development Areas, SYEP, and others. Community Board 18 District Manager Dorothy Turano said that the board has not yet been notified about forthcoming RFPs, but she hopes that when the proposals do come out, the community will look into them and local organizations will request funds for their programs.

Ortiz, who sits on the DYCD board in Sunset Park, pointed out that it is vital for parents, especially those involved with the PTA, and residents to become involved and educate themselves about the DYCD process.

DYCD representatives said that the agency is making its efforts to become more familiar with the com-

munities it serves. Currently, calls for proposals are being developed and community agencies will be asked to submit proposals to meet their needs.

NAB members will partake in the process of sorting through each proposal, reviewing it and submitting their comments and suggestions to DYCD.

Ortiz suggested that having a Canarsie resident on the board would increase chances of new programs for the community.

Those interested in more information about NAB and its role, should call 1-212-442-5880.

DYCD's main task is to administer city, state, and federal funds to effective organizations that serve the needs of the communities they serve. The agency has a wide range of programs, including the Out-of-School Time Initiative, which runs at P.S. 272, and other programs at P.S. 276, also in Canarsie. In 2007, DYCD launched two new initiatives, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Center for Economic Opportunity and the Young Adult Internship Program and Teen Action, a service learning program for middle and high school students.

For more information about DYCD, log on to <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml>.