

Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York

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PAL Teen Impact Center at J.H.S. 22 in the Morrisania section of the Bronx

BRIDGET G. BRENNAN, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Bronx District Attorney ROBERT T. JOHNSON, JOHN B. OSBORN, President of New York City's Police Athletic League (PAL), New York City Police Commissioner WILLIAM J. BRATTON, and EDGAR LIN, principal of Junior High School 22, Jordan L. Mott, announced today the opening of a Police Athletic League (PAL) Teen Impact Center at J.H.S. 22 in the Morrisania section of the Bronx. The program provides area youth with recreational opportunities for a 13-week session.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at 5:30 p.m. this evening at J.H.S. 22, 270 East 167th Street, marking the opening of the PAL Teen Impact Center. Financial support for the program is derived from narcotics trafficking proceeds obtained during criminal prosecutions by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and the Bronx District Attorney's Office.

Young people ages 14 to 19 are invited to participate in the PAL Teen Impact Center, where they can join in a range of games, sports and other fun recreational activities, such as basketball tournaments, volleyball, dance and a variety of table games. Workshops with guest speakers from various law enforcement agencies will be offered periodically. The Teen Impact Center at J.H.S. 22 officially began on March 17 and will run through June 14. During the weeks it is in session, the site will operate every Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Beginning in the spring of 2011, the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Gang Unit, the Bronx District Attorney's Office and the NYPD's 44th Precinct Field Intelligence Division investigated and prosecuted 50 leaders and members of four rival gangs: "Dub City," "WTG", "6 Wild," and most recently "280". A total of 24 firearms were seized during these related investigations. The NYPD credits these investigations in part with driving down shootings in the area. As each successive gang was prosecuted, shooting rates declined.

Members of the four violent narcotic gangs were responsible for 34 shootings in which 43 individuals were shot over the past three years. Gang members sold narcotics and committed robberies in order to fund the purchase of communal firearms, which were often carried by juveniles at the direction of gang leaders.

Social media played a crucial role in the investigations, as gang members used Facebook, Instagram and other applications to communicate about criminal activity, recruit members, and post photographs of stolen money and goods.

Last month, 10 high-ranking members of "280" were indicted in connection with a series of violent incidents, including shootings involving 17 victims. Members of the gang sold narcotics, including crack cocaine, heroin and other drugs. J.H.S. 22 falls within the area where the gang "280" operates.

The Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office and the Bronx District Attorney's Office sponsored another PAL program in Morrisania last summer. Youth ages 6 to 16 participated in a PAL Playstreet at Mott Playground, a New York City Department of Parks and Recreation facility between 166th Street and 167th Street and Morris Avenue and College Avenue. The program followed the arrest of 11 members of "6 Wild." Mott Playground falls within the area where that gang operates.

By supporting PAL, the prosecutors' offices join in a cooperative effort to maintain the gains achieved when drug organizations are removed from a community and build relationships between young people and law enforcement. The Teen Impact Center serves as a safe haven for youth who might otherwise be subjected to gang recruitment and other criminal activity, including violence and drug dealing. This program is the result of a successful collaboration between law enforcement, PAL, the New York City Department of Education, and community members dedicated to protecting the safety of residents and improving the quality of life for young people.

New York City's Police Athletic League is the first and finest civilian-run PAL in the country. Founded in 1914, PAL has served the city's young people for 100 years. PAL provides recreational, educational, cultural and social activities to 40,000 boys and girls annually. It is also the city's largest, independent, nonprofit youth organization. For more information, please visit www.palnyc.org.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor BRIDGET G. BRENNAN said, "We are glad to be able to join with partners in the Bronx District Attorney's Office, the Police Department and the Department of Education to once again sponsor a Police Athletic League program for the young people of this neighborhood. It is particularly gratifying to use forfeited narcotics proceeds to support the many recreational opportunities offered through this Teen Center. With our partners, we are committed to creating a positive, safe environment for recreation."

Bronx District Attorney ROBERT T. JOHNSON said, "The importance of investing in resources for young people is a significant piece of any crime prevention strategy and can never be overstated. The educational and recreational opportunities provided through the PAL's Teen Impact Center are much needed positive alternatives to the temptation and lure of too many dangerous and unlawful activities in the streets. All of the partners in this effort to encourage and support young people in becoming productive members of the community are to be commended."

PAL President JOHN B. OSBORN said, "PAL is pleased to once again partner with New York City's law enforcement community to help combat juvenile crime and crime victimization. PAL began 100 years ago out of the notion that connecting kids to positive activities and role models would help prevent crime, make communities safer and improve the prospects for young people. This youth development model not only has endured the test of time, but has become a best practice model throughout New York City and the nation. We can't think of a better way to use drug forfeiture funds than to invest in the kids and communities of New York City."

Police Commissioner WILLIAM J. BRATTON said, "The NYPD takes great pride in our longstanding partnership with the Police Athletic League and we look forward to its continued success with educating

and providing safe havens for the city's youth. It is rewarding knowing that the money once used by the gangs and crews in a community plagued by gun violence is now being used to help bridge the relationship between members of law enforcement and young adolescents.”