

*The Light of Justice Shines Bright
in the Northwest Bronx*

*community values * faith * social justice * leadership*

Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition

33rd Annual Meeting

Saturday December 8th, 2007

2007 Annual Report



NWBCCC Main Office
103 E. 196th Street
Bronx, NY 10468
(718) 584-0515

President's Report



Teresa Andersen, NWBCCC Board President.

I wish to thank all of the members of the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition for another great year of campaigns, victories, and community leadership! This was my first full year as President and I felt a lot of love and support from everyone! The neighborhoods of the Northwest Bronx are better places to live and grow because of you!

This has been a year of growth and challenges for our organization. We have had to rethink how we organize in order to win some really big victories on issues that can't be solved right here in the Northwest Bronx – but still stay true to our ironclad commitment that grassroots folks are the leaders, negotiators and spokespeople on all of our issue campaigns.

2007 was also a year of new relationships and alliances. We have built strong relationships with the building trades and Bronx Community College in order to get more Bronx residents into good union jobs. NWBCCC is a founder and organizer of alliances such as the Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance, SEATS (Schools Exploding at The Seams) Campaign, Home for the Holidays, and others. I am proud of the way that we are building

new and innovative models for working on the issues we care so much about.

We have also re-established our role on the national level with the Center for Community Change and the National Training and Information Center. We sent leaders and staff to a week-long national training with the Gamaliel Foundation. Good organizing creates relationships that are useful in the next campaign, and I think we have done this very well this year.

This was also a year of testing new ideas that go “outside the box.” Sistas and Brothas United took a bold and pro-active step in May when they claimed the old Fordham Library as a future community and youth center. Instead of reacting to development proposals for the site later on, the youth decided to put forward a strong vision for the site that they will turn into a concrete development plan in 2008. Another “outside the box” idea is that we can have complex relationships with elected officials or private corporations where one campaign may be working well with them and another is really pushing them to do something. We are OK with having tension in our public relationships and I am proud of this organization for its maturity and political depth.

As we look forward to 2008, we can start the year right by voting our values on February 5th 2008. We need to vote for candidates who support our community values and we urge you to join with our Voter Power Project to get out the vote in the Bronx. We will be running a huge phone bank and advertising campaign in January 2008 – and we need you to volunteer!

Finally, the lesson that rings true every year is that without the people in the trenches we can not succeed. You cannot have a democracy run by the elite, even if they say that they support our issues. Grassroots community leaders have to be at the table when major decisions are made about public and private policies that affect our lives, otherwise those policies probably won't help us. So we organize to improve our lives here in the Bronx, but we also organize to insure a healthy and robust democracy in America.

Ok, folks. Let's get out there and organize!

Treasurer's Report

NORTHWEST BRONX COMMUNITY AND CLERGY COALITION, INC.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2007

			Audited	Draft
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	2007 Total	2006 Total
Revenue and other support				
Grants				
Government grants	\$ 2,382,648	\$ -	\$ 2,382,648	\$ 2,042,750
Contributions	242,028	910,810	1,152,838	1,326,669
Other revenue	2,599	-	2,599	18,952
Fund raising	41,810	-	41,810	48,102
Less: direct expenses	(21,087)	-	(21,087)	(14,108)
Program revenue	2,051	-	2,051	386
In-kind contribution	-	-	-	7,000
Interest and dividends	4,171	-	4,171	7,973
Total	2,654,220	910,810	3,565,030	3,437,724
Net assets released from restrictions	1,013,286	(1,013,286)	-	-
Total revenue and other support	3,667,506	(102,476)	3,565,030	3,437,724
Expenses				
Program services				
Community outreach and education	563,470	-	563,470	554,471
Weatherization	2,072,752	-	2,072,752	1,556,518
YOUTH	335,565	-	335,565	383,323
Leadership Institute	119,123	-	119,123	-
AQE downstate	-	-	-	70,862
Total program services	3,090,910	-	3,090,910	2,565,174
Supporting services				
Management and general	416,098	-	416,098	357,469
Fund raising	117,863	-	117,863	109,658
Total supporting services	533,961	-	533,961	467,127
Total expenses	3,624,871	-	3,624,871	3,032,301
Change in net assets before capitalization	42,635	(102,476)	(59,841)	405,423
Adjustments for capitalization	-	-	-	45,005
Change in net assets after capitalization	42,635	(102,476)	(59,841)	450,428
Net assets at beginning of year	120,129	897,653	1,017,782	567,354
Net assets at end of year	\$ 162,764	\$ 795,177	\$ 957,941	\$1,017,782

Heights Region Report



Goal: To improve the quality of life in Kingsbridge and University Heights.

Safety and Traffic

This year, members of the Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Improvement Association, the United Committees of University Heights, Our Lady of Angels Parish and the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center continued organizing to improve safety in their neighborhoods. Concerned that more progress had not been made in installing crosswalks and traffic signals since a Public Meeting in the last year, residents met with Commissioner Moran of the Bronx Department of Transportation to follow-up about several dangerous intersections in University and Kingsbridge Heights. On November 7, 2007, over 50 community residents increased the pressure on the Department of Transportation and the 50th and 52nd Police Precincts in a public accountability meeting at Our Lady of Angels Church. Residents expressed frustration to the Police that streets in their community had become even more dangerous since their Public Meeting over one year ago. By the end of the meeting they had an agreement from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Police Precincts to accompany neighborhood leaders on a walking tour of “problem” safety and traffic areas. The tour, which occurred on November 27, succeeded in highlighting problem areas and getting commitments from the DOT to follow-up with us, conduct studies, and improve dangerous intersections, in concert with the Police.

Safe and Affordable Housing

Housing leaders in the Heights Region have successfully started a new housing campaign targeting SG2, a large

private investment firm that has bought up an astounding number of buildings in the Northwest Bronx. Due to the large number of buildings in our region owned by SG2, and the corporate nature of the company, we developed a new strategy of combining tenant associations between multiple buildings owned by SG2. Over the summer, tenant leaders and organizers from 2320 Aqueduct and 131 West Kingsbridge visited the business offices of SG2 and secured an agreement that Management will meet with the tenants. As a result of their united organizing efforts, tenants have received many repairs in their apartments and their buildings.

Organizing Plans

Kingsbridge and University Heights community leaders will continue to organize for safer streets and decent housing conditions, with a meeting planned for January to move forward with the safer streets campaign. Priorities for the neighborhood include continuing to hold Department of Transportation, Police Precincts and landlords accountable while developing a more powerful alliance of elected officials, neighborhood churches and community centers.

For more information please contact NWBCCC Field Director, Alecia Anthony, at (718) 584-0515 ext 411.

Northern Region Report

Striving to improve the parks, safety, sanitation, transportation, jobs, and housing of the neighborhoods in the Northern Region: Fordham, Bedford Park, and Norwood.

During 2007:

We have moved forward in our campaign to win the “good jobs” promised as part of the filtration plant being built in Van Cortlandt Park. We have won construction training that can help get folks in the neighborhood into the unions that offer these good jobs. This August, our annual Norwood festivals were better than ever. As part of our organizing around safety in Knox Gates and Tracey Towers, adults supported Sistas and Brothas United’s festival in Van Cortlandt Park, and the youth joined over 450 adults at the Oval Park Festival. In the fall, we re-energized Friends of the Oval

Park to press the Parks Department for an improved dog run and better communication, as well as press the Department of Transportation to fix twenty-five broken lights in the Oval, repair lamp bases along Bainbridge Ave, and improve several intersections in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, we worked with parishioners at Our Lady of Refuge to gain the attention of elected officials and the 52nd Precinct about the systematic muggings of undocumented workers, mainly Mexican, in the 196th Street area. Finally, we joined with three other community organizations to form “Norwood and Bedford Park BLOOMS,” a consortium of NWBCCC, Mosholu-Montefiore Community Center, Mosholu Preservation Corporation, and West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center.

We won:

Ninety-six free construction training positions, freeGED classes, and free job counseling from the Department of Environmental Protection.

A strong core of community members who organized for months to create an Oval Park Festival with diverse performances, info tables about community and religious groups, 500 hot dogs, and the painting of new trash cans that we won from the Parks Department

Met with Commissioner Moran of Bronx Department of Transportation and so far most of the lights in the Oval have been fixed and signage improvements have been made on Gun Hill Road

Met with Commissioner Aponte of Bronx Parks Department and won the support of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and others for our demands for Parks



Lisa Murray (left), Annette Melendez (right), and Eileen Markey (back center) serve food and share community resources at the 2007 Oval Park Festival.

Promises of increased police presence on 196th Street and monthly meetings with the Mexican parishioners of Our Lady of Refuge

In 2008:

Our focus this winter will be to strengthen the Friends of the Oval Park by winning improvements in the Oval Park and holding a public meeting to celebrate the Departments of Transportation and Parks or to put pressure on them if they don’t move fast enough with our demands. At the same time, we will evaluate the 52nd Precinct’s progress in improving safety on 196th Street. During the spring we will strengthen relationships in local congregations and tenant associations while starting plans for the Oval Park Festival in June.

We want:

Department of Environmental Protection: Fund thirty more construction training positions and ensure that this training has a stronger connection to union jobs. Community members should come to the Facility Monitoring Committee meeting on December 20 or January 17, 7pm, 3660 Jerome Ave!

Parks Department: Install a new dog run, communicate more with the community about the Oval’s redevelopment, move the east-side Park entrance to align with Holt Place, and reuse excess water from sprinklers. Community members — come to our Norwood Community Meeting on January 9th 2008, 6:30 pm, Oval Park Recreation Center, in the park, use the tunnel entrance near Bainbridge and Van Cortlandt Avenue East!

Department of Transportation: Fix the remaining broken lights in the Oval Park, repair lamp bases along Bainbridge Ave, ensure safe entrances to the Oval Park, and install curb extensions at Gun Hill Road and Bainbridge Avenue. Community members — come the Norwood Community Meeting on January 9th 2008 (info listed above)!

52nd Police Precinct: Provide constant police presence near Kingsbridge subways and along 196th late at night, follow-up with victims on the progress of investigations, conduct a sting operation, and participate in monthly meetings at Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church.

Contact information:

Community members:

Yvette Harris 718-798-9419 Kim Tisdale 347-427-6748
Eileen Markey 718-654-4212 Herbert Godoy 646-734-1205

Staff:

Abby Bellows 718-584-0515 ext. 510

Southern Region Report

Our goal is to develop diverse leadership and address local community issues in collaboration with the neighborhood associations of the Southern Region. The neighborhoods of the Southern Region include Crotona, Mt. Hope and University/West Burnside.

This past year in the Southern Region of the Northwest Bronx has seen the continuation of collective organizing among established community institutions as well as new leadership in growing areas of our community. Working with the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, the Crotona Community Coalition along with St. Martin of Tours organized a housing town hall on October 24th to address the many housing concerns in the community. Parishioners, tenant association leaders, housing advocacy groups, local management corporations and elected officials, including City Council Majority Speaker

Joel Rivera, all participated to make a successful public meeting. The Housing Committee of the NWBCCC, which is comprised mostly of leaders from the Southern Region, played a part in planning this and many other events in the borough and throughout the city, which are described in further detail in the Housing Committee's Annual report.

Earlier in the year in March, 300 members of the Bronx Muslim community gathered in P.S./I.S. 218 to hold an educational town hall regarding the need for recognizing two Muslim holidays in our public school system. As members of a city-wide campaign, the NWBCCC, along with New Settlement Apartments, worked with mosques in the area to highlight the importance of these holidays in Islam. We also worked to expand recognition of the bills passed in the New York State Senate and Assembly that prevented scheduling statewide school exams on any and all religious holidays as well as allowed for excused absences for students on those days. While these bills were introduced by Bronx elected officials and eventually passed as state laws, they do not address the greater concern of NYC's Muslim students having to choose between missing two days of the school year because the system does not recognize their religion or attending school on days that are as important to them as are the days of Christmas or Yom Kippur to Christian or Jewish students.

Victories in 2007:

January 2007 - State Bill goes into effect preventing state testing on holy days, as well as allowing for excused absences for students on those days.

March 31st, 2007 - Coalition for Muslim School Holidays' Bronx Town Hall is held in P.S./I.S. 218 Management company for 60 E. 177th Street is removed by Tenants Association, HPD and New York Community Bank; Tenant Association is currently working with new company to follow up on progress made in building

The Southern Region is already hard at work in preparation for the coming year with plenty of exciting actions and public meetings currently being planned by community leaders. In late January, a Mt.

Hope community meeting will take place to address the safety and quality of life concerns of residents in an area long known for its struggles and victories in organizing around both of these critical

issues. The campaign for Muslim school holidays will also be a topic of discussion as the Mt. Hope community given that Mt. Hope boasts one of the largest concentrations of Muslims in New York State. The Mt. Hope Organization will be part of this effort along with local mosques, churches and schools in the area. A Crotona Quality of Life Town Hall will take place shortly after, and may even involve some joint work with the Mt. Hope institutions around the persistent problems of violent crime, infestation of rats and air pollution in these communities. The NWBCCC will continue to connect the local housing work of our tenant associations to city and state-wide work that ranges from the Mitchell Lama Task Force and the Rent

Guidelines Board to sub-prime lending and the foreclosure crisis. A community meeting in the University/West Burnside neighborhood will follow over the summer and will also deal with sanitation and housing issues.

Upcoming Actions for 2008:

Late January 2008 – Mt. Hope Community Meeting. Participants may include: Local Police, Precincts Bronx Department of Sanitation, and HPD

Spring 2008 – Crotona Quality of Life Town Hall. Goal: To highlight streets and buildings to Dept. of Sanitation where air pollution and rat infestation is at crisis levels and to create timeline to eliminate these threats to neighborhood health

Summer 2008- University/West Burnside Community Meeting. Goal: to highlight crime and pollution hotspots to local precincts and Dept. of Sanitation and to create working timeline to improve conditions

Contact Information:

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Mt. Hope Organization
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October 24th, 2007 – Crotona Housing Town Hall is held in St. Martin of Tours Parish

Housing Committee Report



Joseph Ferdinand in the May 23 New York is Our Home March

The goal of the Housing Committee is to fight for affordable, safe, quality housing for all people living in the neighborhood.

“It was a great march. We marched because in reality New York is our home, and we have to fight for our home.” Ramona Santana speaking about May 23 New York is our Home March:

In 2007

The Housing Committee and the many Tenants Associations in our neighborhoods worked with the New York is our Home Coalition to protect affordable housing and to advocate for better policies on the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB). Highlights of these campaigns include the Bronx-wide planning meeting on April 19 at Lincoln Hospital and the “Hands Around Stuy Town” action and march on May 23. The May 23rd action had nearly 5,000 people — including over 100 from NWBCCC! Another highlight was the June 19th RGB meeting in Queens, and the action earlier that day where tenant leaders left their keys at the office of Goldman Sachs’s Marvin Markus (also President of the RGB) to symbolize him taking away their homes. During the last part of the year, we won a commitment from Councilman Joel Rivera at the October 24 Crotona Town Hall Meeting to support a bill protecting tenants from harassment, and since then have met with his office. The year will come to a powerful close as we participate in the December 17th Public Hearing on the Anti-Harassment Bill sponsored by Oliver Koppell that will help tenants defend themselves against landlord harassment when tenants stand up for the right to live in decent housing.

Victories won this year:

- Hundreds of housing code violations were cleared as tenants organized to get their landlords to make over \$250,000 in repairs
- Tenant leaders from NWBCCC were in the leadership of the actions with New York Is Our Home and at the Rent Guidelines Board
- Tenant leaders from NWBCCC were featured in several New York Times, Daily News, Norwood News and other media outlets throughout the year to talk about our platform and the need for landlords to provide safe, decent housing for all tenants

In 2008

We are moving into 2008 with several hot campaigns. First, the Home for the Holidays Campaign is targeting investment banks for their role in the subprime mortgage foreclosure crisis; and, second, the Private Equity Campaign is targeting private equity companies (like Urban America) that buy affordable housing buildings to get them to stop kicking out low-income tenants and to stop selling their buildings to other landlords who also try to remove tenants from the building for no reason. We will work with the National Training and Information Center’s Save the American Dream Campaign and the Home for the Holidays Campaign to get investment banks and federal regulators to stop the business practices that have led to the subprime mortgage crisis and to get them to provide immediate relief to homeowners in the form of interest rate freezes and reductions. Likewise, the Private Equity Campaign will organize tenants to force private equity companies and government regulators to stop their destruction of affordable housing.

Upcoming Actions:

- December 10th, 2007 Anti-Foreclosure March on Wall Street (with Rainbow PUSH)
- December 17th, 2007 City Council Hearing on Councilman Koppell’s Anti-Harassment Bill
- January 2008: Private Equity action
- February 28th, 2008: Housing Here and Now Town Hall Meeting

To get involved in the Housing Committee, contact:

Hilda Chavis, Steering Committee Member
Brenda Irizarry, Steering Committee Member
Xiomara Mejias, Steering Committee Member
Joseph Ferdinand, Steering Committee Member
Myra Goggins, Steering Committee Member
Jamie Johnson, Steering Committee Member
Ramona Santana, Steering Committee Member
Erik Beach, Housing Organizer, (718) 584-0515 x414,
(646) 379-7670

Armory Committee Report

The Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance (KARA) is an alliance of community leaders from tenant and neighborhood associations, congregations, community institutions, unions, businesses and elected officials who work together to make sure the Kingsbridge Armory is developed into a community-oriented mixed-use facility with 2,000 school seats built next to the Armory building.

KARA seeks living wages and union protections for local residents in the construction and permanent jobs, community space, an affordable recreation center, and environmental protections through the negotiation of a Community Benefits Agreement, a Labor Peace Agreement and a Project Labor Agreement with the developer of the Armory.

“Our biggest victory has been that we’ve had input into the entire process of selecting a developer for the Armory. We were able to get living wage preference language into the RFP, to see the proposals, and to make recommendations to the developers based on their proposals. Our coalition has grown and we’ve been able to bring the Bronx building trades on board and just about all the Bronx city council members have signed onto KARA. Our organizing culminated in a very successful march in October. We had a turnout that really signaled to the developer that KARA is the voice of the community. And the developer now knows that they to negotiate three agreements with KARA in order to get our support for the project” said Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter.

In 2007

This year KARA continued its work representing the community on the task force set up by the New York City Economic Development Corporation. We gave

critical feedback on the Armory proposals that were submitted. The city expects to select a developer sometime in the next few weeks. In anticipation of the



500 community and union members marched around the Armory in the rain October 27, 2007

city’s announcement, KARA held a 500-person rally October 27th 2007 at Fordham Manor Reformed Church that showed that KARA is truly the voice of the community regarding the future of the Kingsbridge Armory. Local congregations, community centers and unions were present to tell the future developer to negotiate with KARA and to tell the Department of Education to build four schools (with a total of 2,000 seats) next to the Armory.

Assemblyman Jose Rivera, Council Member Joel

Rivera and Councilmember Helen D. Foster all agreed to stand by KARA and they all signed onto the KARA Unity Pledge (other elected officials, unions, and community groups have also signed onto the Unity Pledge). Despite the rain, it was an exciting, energy-filled event which culminated in a powerful and spiritually moving march around the Armory.

In 2008

KARA’s major organizing goal for 2008 is to get the Armory’s developer to negotiate three agreements with KARA: a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) and Labor Peace Agreement (LPA) and a Project Labor Agreement (PLA). As soon as a developer is announced we will move to get them to the table, and we will need all of the members of NWBCCC to help us win our vision for the Kingsbridge Armory!

For more information contact:

Ava Farkas: (646) 533-545-4/ (718) 584-0515 X311
Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter: (718) 220-5419

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Immigrant Rights Report

Mission: To secure the rights of all immigrants, documented and non-documented, and to win national comprehensive immigration reform

Policy position: The clergy and lay leaders of the Immigrant Rights Committee call on our elected officials to enact a just, humane, and moral immigration law for:

- Broad legalization of immigrants
- Right to work, with a living wage and labor protections
- Family unity by reforming the immigration system to allow families to reunite

Tuesday May 1, 2007, Immigrant Right Committee leaders, garbed in NWBCCC regalia, pose for the cameras in front of the main office



members.” - Djounedou Titikpina

In 2007

On May 1st close to 100 people turned-out for a city-wide mobilization for immigrant rights. At Judson Memorial Church in the Village our clergy leaders ignited the crowd of more than 500 with a powerful homily on the moral imperative for immigrant, civil and human rights.

A few weeks later in the early morning hours of Tuesday June 19, more than 150 clergy and lay leaders traveled all the way to our nation’s capital, Washington D.C to take part in an interfaith ceremony and rally highlighting the

consequences of family aspects of the immigration debate. Later that day, along with 2,000 community leaders from across the country, we marched to the White House to deliver our message of a just, humane and moral immigration law directly to the President.

In 2008

As we continue in the struggle to pass national comprehensive-humane immigration reform that will put our undocumented brothers and sisters on a path to citizenship we realize that the fight for immigrant rights is also won closer to home. In the first quarter of 2008 we will continue our efforts to bring more

immigrant services to our area. In recent years we have seen the immigrant community in the Bronx grow dramatically, with many new residents from Africa, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean. The demand for services like ESOL classes, legal representation and advice, citizenship classes, has increased – without enough resources to get the job done. We will work for an increase in local resources for immigrants in the Bronx and we will continue to fight for real comprehensive immigration reform on the national level!

For More Information, Please Contact:

Djounedou Titikpina,
Immigrant Rights Committee Core Leader

Emmanuel Caicedo, Immigrant Rights Organizer,
(718) 584-0515 x313, (917) 325-7633

Education Committee Report

New York SEATS (Schools Exploding at the Seams)

We engage parents, students, school staff and concerned community members to improve the quality of public education for all children in the Northwest Bronx Community.

Policy Platform:

Increase the graduation rate, end school overcrowding!
The February 2007 Capital Budget Amendment must:

1. Restore the 1,703 seats cut in June 2007 from the Five Year Capital Plan.
2. Add an additional 732 seats so that 2,000 seats can be sited at the Armory and the Leadership Institute High School can have a school.
3. Start the process toward a new Five Year Capital Plan that builds enough quality school facilities to increase the graduation rate to a minimum standard of 70% of students graduation in four years and 80% in six years. We expect future capital plans to set even higher standards.

In 2007

Since the release of our report "Planning for Failure" at last years annual meeting, we've been working hard to end overcrowding and increase the graduation rate. In February, Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum released a city-wide version of our report reflecting how the Department of Education (DoE) is "Planning for Failure" in all five boroughs. In June, the Education Committee announced the launch of NY SEATS school construction campaign at a legislative breakfast and press conference. NY SEATS is a joint effort of the NWBCCC, parents, students, teachers, principals, community based organizations, public and elected officials. The Legislative Breakfast was sponsored by Council Members Robert Jackson, Oliver Koppell, and Joel Rivera. We met with council members from all over the city to discuss problems with current school construction plans and possible solutions. The press conference was attended by parents, students, and City Council Members from all five boroughs standing together to fight overcrowding. In October, in conjunction with KARA we held a 500-person rally October 27, 2007 at Fordham Manor Reformed Church. Local schools, churches, community centers and unions were present to tell the Department of Education to build four schools (with a total of 2,000 seats) next to the Armory and to let the future developer of the Kingsbridge Armory know they must negotiate with KARA if they want community support for their project.

And we've still been busy working to improve issues at individual schools. In the last year we:

- secured an agreement to provide peer mediation and conflict resolution to students at PS/MS 279 and are currently working with the school community to implement the programs.
- with the immigrant rights committee, hosted a free legal clinic for parents and the community surrounding PS/MS 279.



Jun 25th 2007 Parents, Students and students are joined at press conference to launch NY SEATS by City Council members from Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan.

- At MS 391/TAPCO, in partnership with the Phipps After School Program, we won the construction of a fence across the street from the school creating a much safe environment for students and community members.

In 2008

Between now and next December, we have big plans to ensure that our students have quality school facilities to end overcrowding and increase the graduation rate. The Leadership Institute High School was promised its own building when it opened three years ago. After being shuffled from the Webster Avenue PAL to an annex of an elementary and middle school, its time for the LI to have its own school that includes a functioning science lab, computer labs, a library, a gym and lockers. And, this year we must end the Department of Education's (DoE) refusal to build schools at the Kingsbridge Armory. In one of the most historically overcrowded districts in the city, DoE officials have turned their backs on a golden opportunity for our community. They must site 2,000 seats for construction at the Armory. These seats will relieve pressure on local elementary schools, provide a middle school for the surrounding community and create much needed space for more Bronx high school students to succeed. We want to continue to reach out to other communities around the city to make sure that we have a capital plan where construction goals are in line with instruction goals- we need smaller classes and a much higher graduation rate.

For more information contact:

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**Ronn Jordan
Mary Corsey
Teresa Andersen
Miguel Gomez**

**Marta Delorbe
Nancy Maldonado
Mirquia Capellan**

Sistas and Brothas United Report

SBU's mission is to develop the leadership of youth in the Northwest Bronx community who are concerned with the conditions in their neighborhood, interested in developing creative ways to address these problems in concrete ways, and believe in their own ability to build people power to hold all public officials accountable for the decisions they make. SBU's leaders fight for educational justice, more jobs for youth and community residents, and for more community-based resources.

"Our money is spent on war while the concrete streets in our neighborhoods crack and crumble. Our education decays because there is a lack of resources in our schools and little motivation for the students. I live with struggles all around me. I feel like a prisoner in my own school. There are no jobs in the Bronx for a young person like me. In SBU, I watched mentors help youth move forward with their lives and then I became a mentor too. Now I want better lives for all of the youth. Together we can overcome challenges and break through the obstacles that are holding us back."

Elizabeth Vincent, SBU core leader

Major organizing activities in 2007:

In 2007, SBU began to work in new and exciting ways. As the base of core leaders has grown more experienced they have explored new and innovative ways to organize in schools and in the neighborhood. We now provide more training for middle and high school students and we are building better relationships with staff inside the schools. This has given our program a more diverse base of leaders who are organizing to make their schools better, some of them as young as the fifth grade!

Goal # 1: To open a Student Success Center in at least two high schools in the neighborhood

Outcome: For the past two years, SBU has worked as a member organization of a citywide group called the Urban Youth Collaborative to open a program called Student

Success Centers. The main focus of an SSC is to increase high school graduation rates by creating a center on a school's campus that acts as a "one stop shop for success." The SSC will ideally house a guidance counselor, a social worker, a career counselor, and a college counselor in one location in a school that students can access both during the school day and after school. Our youth leaders have discussed this idea with the Principal Councils at Walton, Kennedy, and Roosevelt Campuses to identify which small schools could benefit from this program. Through an ongoing series of one-on-one and group meetings, we have started to work with the Principal at the Bronx Engineering and Technology

Academy on the Kennedy Campus and the Principal at Teaching and Professions on the Walton Campus. We will be meeting with staff and students from both schools in the coming months to finalize plans for planned openings of the SSCs in 2008. In UYC, our negotiations with the city have been going well and they have already opened one SSC on the Bushwick Campus and have agreed to provide funds

for one to open at the Lane Campus in Brooklyn. In December we will follow-up with the city to talk about funding for SSCs in the Bronx and other areas of the city. We have secured funding commitments from three private foundations to fund the SSC program: Gates Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and Deutsche Bank.

Goal # 2: Improve school safety in local schools and to open conflict mediation and peer mediation courses at local high schools and middle schools

Outcome: Last spring at PS/MS 20 we trained thirty fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in peer-to-peer conflict mediation. The students met on a weekly basis and were able to discuss their own personal conflicts and come up with creative ways to support each other. This December we will be starting a new series of trainings at PS/MS 20 with the graduates from the training program last year. We will also be conducting similar trainings at MS 399 with a



Sistas and Brothas United Report

continued

group of fifth graders. At Clinton High School, students have decided to work with the groups that already have a peer mediation program to expand access to the program for all students.

Goal # 3: To open a pilot Art and Technology Program featuring a film class and a spoken word class

Outcome: SBU's leaders have worked for three years to develop the concept for an art and technology center called BronXchanges. Students developed this idea by working with professionals from the Museum of Modern Art, Eyebeam, and artists they've met at the Bronx Museum of Arts and other community based arts institutions. Youth want the center to have an artist residency program that encourages community artists to work with people in the community to develop projects that integrate arts and technology fields using social justice themes. This year we completed an outline for two initial classes that will be run by youth in the spring. They will use the feedback they get from these first classes to structure the next phase of the program.

Goal # 4: Conduct a neighborhood campaign to turn the Old Fordham Public Library into a community youth center that expands SBU's current program and provides space for an Art and Technology Center and a Bronx Workers Center

Outcome: The youth leaders from SBU are in the forefront of a very important community development project in the Northwest Bronx – to reclaim the vacant Old Fordham Public Library as a new site for a youth and community center. The building is adjacent to the bustling Fordham Road shopping strip, the third largest neighborhood shopping district in New York City. Tens of thousands of youth travel along Fordham Road every week. It is critical that this old library remain a community asset (instead of being sold by the city to a developer who will lease to yet another jeans and sneaker store) given its unique location in the life of the Northwest Bronx community. On May 19th 2007, SBU held a community meeting on the issue, attracting more than 150 youth and adult community members who received commitments from State Assemblyman Jose Rivera and City Council members Joel Rivera, Oliver Koppell and Robert Jackson to support the transformation of this vacant building into youth and community center. They have held several community events promoting this project and collecting signatures of thousands of residents who want this library to be turned

into a community center for our youth. They have also met with City College's Architecture Department and they've agreed to work with us to complete a design for this new community youth center.

Major Victories in 2007:

- Secured a commitment from Chancellor Joel Klein and Deputy Chancellor Christopher Cerf to open Student Success Centers in NYC public schools
- Secured a commitment from Assemblyman Jose Rivera, City Council members Joel Rivera, Oliver Koppel, and Robert Jackson to support our campaign to turn the Old Fordham Library into a community youth center
- Trained thirty fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in conflict mediation
- Mobilized 200 community residents at a summer anti-violence speakout in Van Cortlandt park
- Finalized a curriculum for film and spoken word classes to kickoff the BronXchanges art and technology program

Major Organizing Activities for 2008:

In 2008, our youth will be focused on gaining commitments from mayoral candidates to:

- Open Student Success Centers in ten high schools throughout the city and support their ongoing growth and development with central funding from the DOE
- Turn the Old Fordham Library into a community youth center
- Open an art and technology center called BronXchanges
- Support our May 2008 UYC youth conference with hundreds of students throughout the city

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