

CAMPAIGN FOR SUMMER JOBS

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CAMPAIGN ENDORSERS

88th Precinct Community & Youth Council, Inc.
Alianza Dominicana
Art Without Borders
Asian-American Consulting Services
Association for a Better New York
Baychester Gunhill Youth Council
BHRAGS, Inc.
Boys & Girls Harbor, Inc.
Boys and Girls Republic
Bronx Shepherds Restoration Corporation
CAMBA, Inc.
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Center for Family Life, St. Christopher--Otilie
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Correctional Association
Covenant House
CSA After-School Tutorial Program
Deerfield Area Association
Directions for Our Youth
The Door, University Settlement
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Ecumenical Community Development Organization
FEGS
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies
Forest Hills Community House
Fort Greene Recreation Inc.
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Good Shepherd Services
Grand Street Settlement
Greenwich House
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Henry Street Settlement
Hudson Guild
Human Services Council
Inwood House
Jobs for Youth Apprenticeship Program
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Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club
LaGuardia Community College
LEAP, Inc.
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Neighborhood Family Services Coalition
Nick's Healthnet
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Springfield Gardens Methodist Church
CSA After School Tutorial Program
Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center
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Sunnyside Community Services
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United Therapeutic Community
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Urban Strategies, Inc.
The Valley, Inc.
Washington Heights-Inwood Coalition
Woodside on the Move, Inc.
Ya-Ya Network
YEP Contractors' Coalition
YMCA of Greater NY, Westside
Youth Dares

TESTIMONY OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR SUMMER JOBS

BEFORE THE YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

LEW FIDLER, CHAIR

OVERSIGHT HEARING: 2004 SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 22, 2004

Presenters:

Anthony Ng
Legislative Advocate
United Neighborhood Houses
Co-chair, Campaign for Summer Jobs

Chloe Pullman
Staff Associate
Neighborhood Family Services Coalition
Co-chair, Campaign for Summer Jobs

Good morning Honorable Chair Fidler and members of the Youth Services Committee. My name is Anthony Ng, and I am the Legislative Advocate for United Neighborhood Houses, and one of the co-chairs of the Campaign for Summer Jobs. My name is Chloe Pullman, Staff Associate, Neighborhood Family Services Coalition, and co-chair of the Campaign for Summer Jobs. For five years now, our respective organizations have partnered to coordinate this Campaign, which has successfully advocated for State and City funding for summer jobs. We want to thank the City Council for continuing your strong and unwavering support of the summer youth employment program (SYEP). Our Campaign, which is endorsed by nearly 100 organizations across the City, appreciates your leadership on this issue. Thank you for being the champions for youth that you are.

We are here today to acknowledge the hard work of the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) on SYEP, their advocacy for SYEP money from Albany, and to applaud the commitment from the City Council of New York to add \$11.5 million to this program. We also want to offer a few suggestions on ways to improve the program.

Our primary and most important suggestion for improving the summer youth employment program (SYEP) is for the City to baseline its share of the money needed to serve 40,000 youth in 2005. We would like to see these baselined dollars in the Mayor's FY2006 Preliminary Budget in January. Long-term, we urge the City to create a permanent funding stream for summer jobs. In FY2005, NYC's share of the SYEP program budget was \$17.7 million in city tax levy dollars, of which \$6.2 million is baselined, and \$11.5 million was added in the adopted budget. We understand the burden that the City shares with the State in funding SYEP. However, if the City baselines its share of the funding needed to serve 40,000 youth, DYCD and its contractors will be able to improve the quality of the program in the following specific ways:

- Allow DYCD to advance dollars to its contractors, earlier and in greater amounts prior to the program's start. **This will allow the contractors to better recruit, interview and hire the number of qualified seasonal staff they need to operate the program. In addition, quality staffpersons enhances program outreach, intake, enrollment, development of worksites, instruction in the educational workshops, and interaction with the young people.** Many contractors would like to hire their seasonal staff in April and May. This year, based on the submission of budgets from the contractors, DYCD could only advance up to 20% of their contract budgets and the contractors were not asked for their budgets until late May; this impedes the ability of contractors to hire the staff they need to operate their programs.
- Applications and program reporting materials can be distributed to the contractors earlier (perhaps in early Spring) to allow for a more organized and timely start to the program.

Since the transfer of SYEP from the now defunct Department of Employment to DYCD in mid-2003, DYCD has worked diligently to incorporate the program into its portfolio and improve its working relationship with its contractors. From the moment the 2003 program ended, and despite the funding issues inherent in SYEP, DYCD made a commitment to administer a large-scale program serving tens of thousands of youth in 2004.

It is DYCD's leadership that recognized the need to reach out to the community based organizations (CBOs) that work directly with youth, to learn from their experiences about what constitutes a good summer jobs program. For example, when DYCD was re-designing the program in preparation for a new RFP last Fall, it invited CBOs to focus groups to gather their input. DYCD also convened focus groups last month to hear feedback about this past summer's SYEP program. **This type of communication and exchange between DYCD, provider organizations, and other stakeholders represents a spirit of true partnership, and is the kind of continuous improvement process that should be standard operating procedure, particularly when a new program model is being developed and implemented.**

We were pleased to see the following changes to this past summer's program:

- An improved payroll system, where the central feature was to pay young people with debit cards. This new system allowed youth to be paid in a much more timely fashion than in previous summers, and addressed the safety concerns that were inherent in picking up paychecks from paysites.
- Flexibility in the hours of a workday that constituted an eligible job, and flexibility over when education workshops were offered, helped to extend SYEP opportunities to youth who had difficulty accessing them in the past (e.g. summer school students).
- Contractors were able to design and conduct the education workshops in the manner most appropriate for them. This included running the workshops with in-house staff, or hiring seasonal staff and or inviting outside speakers to do so. Contractors also scheduled the workshops at times that were sensitive to the work schedules of the young people
- Increasing the administrative fee for the contractors, to assist their ability to handle their new intake and enrollment responsibilities.

With these changes, the summer jobs program is heading in the right direction. In the spirit of making SYEP the best it can be, the Campaign for Summer Jobs offers the following suggestions in 5 areas – intake, payroll system, education workshop, program monitoring, and CBO partnership. These suggestions are based on our survey of SYEP contractors and countless other discussions with contractors since the end of summer.

Intake

- In order to have enough time for young people to learn about SYEP opportunities and gather the needed personal and income information for their applications, the program must start earlier. Applications and program reporting materials need to be distributed to the contractors earlier (perhaps in early Spring) to allow for a more organized and timely start to the program.

Payroll system

- To further the goals of financial literacy, DYCD should consider issuing paystubs on payday. A paystub would allow the young person to understand what taxes are withheld, number of hours worked, and have an accurate record of their earnings. No paystubs were offered this summer, so it was difficult for young people to verify that they were appropriately paid for the number of hours they worked.
- There needs to be more direct and upfront training for the young people on how to use a debit card. For many young people, this was their first experience using them and ATMs.

- The debit card fees need to be reduced and eliminated if possible. DYCD should pursue further partnership with banks to offer ATM and debit card services that are free of charge. Such partnerships could be considered in-kind donations to the City, and would allow banks to fulfill their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) obligations.

Education Workshops

- Through clear and direct communication to the contractors, reinforce the practice that workshops can be provided in a flexible manner, as it relates to frequency, sequence of topics, time of the day and or workweek, and with personnel who are in-house, seasonal, or outside speakers.
- Several contractors felt that the workshop topics were redundant from the school year, and some also wanted to make them age appropriate. To encourage best practices and program quality, DYCD should coordinate the solicitation and dissemination of curriculums that contractors developed to address these two concerns and any other ones. DYCD might want to consider developing sample curriculums for the contractors too.

Program Monitoring

- Many contractors valued the hard work of DYCD staff in responding to their program implementation issues in a timely and accurate manner via e-mail. DYCD needs to ensure that there are adequate resources to continue staffing the SYEP program with such quality program managers.
- Several contractors cited incidents where they had poor interactions with their program monitors. DYCD needs to ensure that its program monitors are familiar with the contractors and oversee them in a customer friendly manner.

CBO Partnership

- In the spirit of continuing the collaboration that DYCD values with its CBOs, communicate to the contractors, which of their comments and suggestions collected from the summer 2004 feedback focus groups, will be incorporated into 2005's program.

Youth unemployment remains high in this City, and while SYEP served nearly 34,000 young people this summer, the need for summer job opportunities remains great. DYCD reports that they received 70,000 applications for SYEP, which means that 36,000 youth who applied, did not get an SYEP job. There are 838,617 young people ages 14-21 in NYC who could apply for an SYEP job, which is approximately 10.5% of the population of NYC. The 34,000 youth that got SYEP jobs only represents 4% of the youth of NYC. It is clear that our young people need summer job opportunities to prepare them for the workforce, and SYEP is vital in providing the first job for many of our youth. Having a first job gives one the important chance to begin a lifelong path of developing job skills, exploring careers, and earning money.

We look forward to working with the City to ensure the success of SYEP, secure needed State and City funding, and create a positive experience for NYC's teens.

Thank you.