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PAL TEEN IMPACT CENTER OPENS AT BROOKLYN'S ALBANY HOUSES

BRIDGET G. BRENNAN, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, FELIX A. URRUTIA JR., Executive Director of New York City's Police Athletic League, Kings County District Attorney CHARLES J. HYNES, New York City Housing Authority Chairman JOHN B. RHEA and New York City Police Commissioner RAYMOND W. KELLY announced today the opening of a new Police Athletic League (PAL) Teen Impact Center in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The center will serve teens living in the Albany Houses and the Weeksville Gardens Houses, both NYCHA Housing Developments, and offer recreational, educational and cultural opportunities.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony this morning at the Albany Houses Community Center, 164 Troy Avenue, Brooklyn, marked the opening of the PAL Teen Impact Center, as well as a successful collaboration between law enforcement, local agencies and community members dedicated to protecting the safety of residents and improving the quality of life for area youth. The Teen Impact Center will offer recreational

opportunities and lectures, with financial support derived from forfeited narcotics trafficking proceeds obtained during criminal prosecutions.

In July 2010, the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office (SNP), the Kings County District Attorney's Office and the NYPD's Brooklyn North Narcotics Division dismantled a drug trafficking network that sold heroin and crack-cocaine within the Albany Houses. Drug dealers operated inside apartments, public hallways and stairwells of the housing complex, which is home to nearly 2,000 residents. SNP and the Kings County DA's Office are continuing to work with NYCHA on eviction proceedings against those defendants residing in Albany Houses.

The new PAL Teen Impact Center is a result of a cooperative effort to maintain the gains achieved when drug organizations are removed from a community, and to improve relationships between young people and law enforcement. It will serve as a haven for youth who might otherwise be subjected to gang recruitment and other criminal activity, including violence and drug dealing.

Most importantly, the center will provide a safe environment for teenagers to participate in fun recreational programs. Youth ages 14 to 19 are invited to register for a four-month session. Sporting and cultural opportunities offered include Cops & Kids Basketball, a volleyball tournament, the Community Fashion Show and other activities. Educational programs presented by PAL, the NYPD and the District Attorneys' offices cover Gang Awareness, Bullying, Drugs and Alcohol, and the Arrest to Sentencing Process, among other topics. Computer literacy training and academic advisors will also be available.

Three recent college graduates who live in the community have been hired to staff the PAL Teen Impact Center. Educational programs will be offered at the Albany Houses Community Center, while the recreational component of the program will take place at the gymnasium of the nearby Paul Robeson School High School in an arrangement with the Department of Education.

An open house for parents who wish to learn more about the program will be held on Thursday, March 3 at the Albany Houses Community Center. New York City's Police Athletic League is the first, finest and largest civilian-run PAL in the country. Founded in 1914, PAL provides recreational, educational, cultural and social activities to over 56,000 boys and girls annually. It is also the city's largest, independent, nonprofit youth organization. PAL currently operates 11 teen centers around the city.

"We are happy to offer recreational opportunities to young people in the Albany Houses and the Weeksville Garden Houses. It is particularly satisfying to support this PAL program with money taken from drug organizations, which have drained this community of so much talent and so many resources," said Special Narcotics Prosecutor BRIDGET G. BRENNAN.

"This is exactly the kind of collaboration and on-the-ground initiative that has

made PAL synonymous with juvenile crime prevention in New York City. If not PAL working with our great city's law enforcement agencies, then who? We are obliged to serve youth confronting the highest risk factors in NYC, and are grateful to the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York for believing in PAL," said PAL's Executive Director FELIX A. URRUTIA JR.

Kings County District Attorney CHARLES J. HYNES said, "The message today is that law enforcement and crime prevention do not stop at the courthouse door, but require a cooperative, continuous, citywide effort to provide alternative opportunities and activities for young people, the way this new Teen Impact Center will. The new center will be great for Crown Heights, and by extension, Brooklyn as a whole."

"Improving the quality of life for our residents by providing safeguards for their well-being and implementing strategies that will reduce both the likelihood and incidence of crime are critically important to NYCHA in its long term plans to preserve public housing," said JOHN B. RHEA, Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority. "NYCHA recognizes that proper delivery of social services is often a pillar of individual well-being and overall community health, and the work at this Teen Impact Center at the Albany Houses will go a long way towards achieving that goal."