

Bed-Stuy youth taking pride in the community



Some high school students take part in Bed Stuy ReGeneration Project workshops that help prepare them for life after graduation while others take a break from wintry work that has increased thanks to 10 days of snow in January.

The relatively bad weather this winter has been good news for a youth program partially funded by snow-clearing operations.

Bed Stuy's Project ReGeneration has seen a 30% jump in clients since the wintry weather has made streets and sidewalks treacherous. And with winter set to stay a few more weeks, prospects are good for the snow and ice removal operations-and for the teens who do it.

"Snow and ice clearing is a job-training component of our program," said Barnabas Shakur, the project's founder.

"It teaches our teens things they need to know about the workplace-to be on time, to interact with people, to take pride in what you do, and if you don't do a good job, you will be replaced."

"Snow clearing is just a method to give them direction."

There were 10 days on which it snowed in January, more than all of last year. As a result, Shakur said, business has been good as property owners recognize that the \$30 charge is a reasonable rate to clear snow and ice not only from the sidewalk and stairs, but also clear a path on the property to a ground floor entrance if necessary.

The overall goal of Project ReGeneration, Shakur said, is eliminating teen idleness. To accomplish that, the project works with high schoolers 14 to 19 in Bedford Stuyvesant and surrounding neighborhoods, often placing them as interns with similar organizations or companies.

"It allows them to get actual work experience," Shakur said.

The project also has a number of workshops in which the teens learn things from hygiene to how to talk to police, "things they don't learn in schools."

Some of the teens are now gearing up for one highlight of the project, a poetry competition sponsored in part by the New York Knicks. The contest semi-finals are set for this weekend and eventual winners will take home more than \$200,000 in educational grants and prizes.

The contest started in November with more than 1,000 entries. The 150 who made the cut were then given six weeks' training to hone their presentations, which will be made at three locations this weekend.

The first will take place Friday at 6 p.m. at The Point, 940 Garrison Ave., the Bronx. The others will at two Man-



hattan locations: Saturday, 3-6 p.m. at Nuyorican Poet's Café, 236 E. 3rd St., and 3-6 p.m. Sunday at the Bowers Poetry Club, 308 Bowers.

More information on Project ReGeneration can be found on its website, www.pr-g.org, or by calling (718) 684-1014.

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