

# District 18 Gets Big Federal Bucks to Fight Drugs

By Craig McGuire

To address the growing threat to school children posed by drugs, Community School District 18 received the third-largest grant in a \$14.2 million federal emergency relief package, distributed nationwide.

The U.S. Department of Education is sending the funds to assist schools in 34 of the nation's communities with significant drug and alcohol abuse problems, and found District 18 among the most hurting.

District 18 submitted statistics concerning youth arrests and conviction records, substance abuse arrests, attendance records, suspension records, and reading test scores, and received \$949,040 in emergency monies for its East Flatbush and Canarsie schools.

With funds to provide for three years, five alternative classes were created in District 18, one in each of the intermediate schools in the district.

"The Alternative School/New Start Scholarship Program," originally slated for a September, 1993 opening, was not launched until November due to delays created by the asbestos crisis in New York City schools.

The schools involved include Isaac Bildersee J.H.S. 68, 956 East 82nd Street, Meyer Levin J.H.S. 285, 5909 Beverly Road, Arthur Somers J.H.S. 252, Lenox Road and East 94th Street, Winthrop J.H.S. 232, 905 Winthrop Street, and John Wilson J.H.S. 211, 1001 East 100th Street.

Mona Lener, director of drug abuse and prevention

programs in District 18, said the program focuses on at-risk youths.

"It provides special support services, group workshops, [and] guidance counseling services, among other things," said Lener.

The funding is also being used to establish a cultural arts program, a summer program, peer leadership training, and conflict resolution counseling.

"The goal of these programs is to provide the students with a better sense of what is out there for them," explained Lener, "and encourage them to go after something."

Students were selected for the programs either by the administration in each school, or through parental request.

The program also employs a family social worker, as well as a sub-

stance abuse prevention officer who travels to each school in the district.

Community organizations have also taken an active interest in the program.

The Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA) is coordinating a "Career Futures" program, funded by District 18.

Renee Garrett, CAMBA coordinator for the project, said each of the students involved in the program will visit the New York City Job and Career Center, 54th Street and 8th Avenue in Manhattan.

"We are trying to ease the transition from middle school into high school, and eventually into the job market," said Garrett.

At the center, the students are instructed on how to write a resume, and go on mock interviews, among other things.

The "Career Futures" program also involves guest speakers visiting each school, and field trips for the children to observe various employment environments first-hand.