

For Immediate Release
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DYCD Grants YWCA of Queens Out of School Time Middle School Expansion Funding
YWCA of Queens to Partner with PS/IS 268 to Provide Comprehensive Afterschool Programming

Flushing, NY (June 18, 2014)—YWCA of Queens was awarded funding from the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to launch Out of School Time (OST) Middle School Expansion with a partner school. The annual award of \$225,000 will be renewed for four years totaling \$900,000. Helmed by Mayor de Blasio, the OST expansion initiative aims to increase afterschool programs to New York City's middle school students. **YWCA of Queens will kick-off the afterschool programming in the fall of 2014 with PS/IS 268, headed by Principal Lissa Grant-Stewart.**

"We are thrilled to work with PS/IS 268 and its staff and leaders to design an engaging curriculum that aligns our mission with the needs of the students to provide the highest quality programming," stated Stacy McKelvey, Director of Center for Education & Career Services at the YWCA of Queens. All partner middle schools participating in the DYCD OST Middle School Expansion programs currently lack comprehensive afterschool services. **Principal Lissa Grant-Stewart and the administrative team at PS/IS 268 expressed the enormous need for providing enrichment activities to their student population.** "Middle school is a pivotal time when children transition into young adults. Providing youth with academic support as well as engaging them in creative and hands-on activities not provided in the regular school hours can greatly enhance a student's learning experience as well as address the challenges many youth face," stated McKelvey.

Principal Lissa Grant-Stewart stated, "I feel fortunate to have forged a partnership with the YWCA of Queens. I am very excited, as it will provide our students with academic support, physical recreation, and life skills. The students will participate in activities that bring Science, Technology, ELA, Arts, and Math to life. We hope to instill a passion for pursuing a career in a STEM related field through journalism, robotics, basketball and more. My students and I are eager for the program to begin!"

This program is a collaboration that will combine YWCA of Queens' expertise with school staff's knowledge and insight into their students. The YWCA of Queens also highly values student voice and many of the activities were chosen by the students through surveys. The OST program will operate for 15 hours per week during the school year for a total of 540 hours annually. **The program will include a wide array of academic, recreational, and cultural activities to serve approximately 75 middle school students per year. Students will experience hands-on and project-based STEM activities, learning to build structures such as motor cars, roller coasters, and bridges; literacy activities include a student-written school newspaper, creating podcasts, and screenplay writing; and enrichment programming comprised of leadership class, basketball, cheerleading, and volleyball.**

"Our education department has been expanding tremendously in the last few years, and we are thankful to have the support from DYCD and our community," stated Helen J. Kim, Executive Director of the YWCA of Queens. She explained the impact afterschool programs have on the community: "I think it is vital for community leaders to continue to advocate for the capital resources necessary to implement enrichment activities for underserved youth. **This type of programming reduces high school drop-out rate, increases test scores, and helps to prevent involvement in criminal activity. Furthermore, it builds long-term social/emotional skills and healthy decision-making,**

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setting students up for academic, career, and financial success. This initiative is aligned with our mission to empower and enrich the lives of individuals through education and advocacy.”

Principal Lissa Grant-Stewart echoed this sentiment: “I have embraced Mayor De Blasio’s initiative to provide students with access to afterschool programs through the OST Middle School Expansion initiative. This initiative will enhance our program and help us to close the achievement gap and address the challenges of adolescence.”

For more information about how to give your time, talent, tenacity and financial support to the YWCA of Queens, please visit www.ywcaqueens.org.

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About the YWCA of Queens

Founded in 1978, the YWCA of Queens is a multi-tiered community organization with a mission to eliminate racism and empower women. Located in the center of one of the most diverse communities in the country, the YWCA of Queens tailors its services to meet the specific needs of individuals and families in the communities through programs for education and economic self-sufficiency.

About the YWCA of Queens’ Center for Education & Career Services

The YWCA of Queens has been providing HSE classes for 15 years and is a leader in HSE and ESOL programming. The YWCA of Queens has an 80% average HSE passing rate compared to New York State’s 59% average passing rate, the lowest in the nation. The HSE program targets out-of-school and at-risk youth, as well as providing support to undocumented youth through a current contract with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Initiative. The HSE Career Services serves both youth and adults through HSE testing preparation and career workshops and counseling provided by the on-site job developer. The goal is to guide all program participants to find employment and financial security.

About PS/IS 268

PS/IS 268’s mission is to embody a nurturing environment that will mold our diverse population in order to create self-motivated, caring and successful citizens. We are committed to providing students with a strong program inclusive of academics, fine arts, and physical health. It is located on 92-07 175th Street, Jamaica, NY.

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