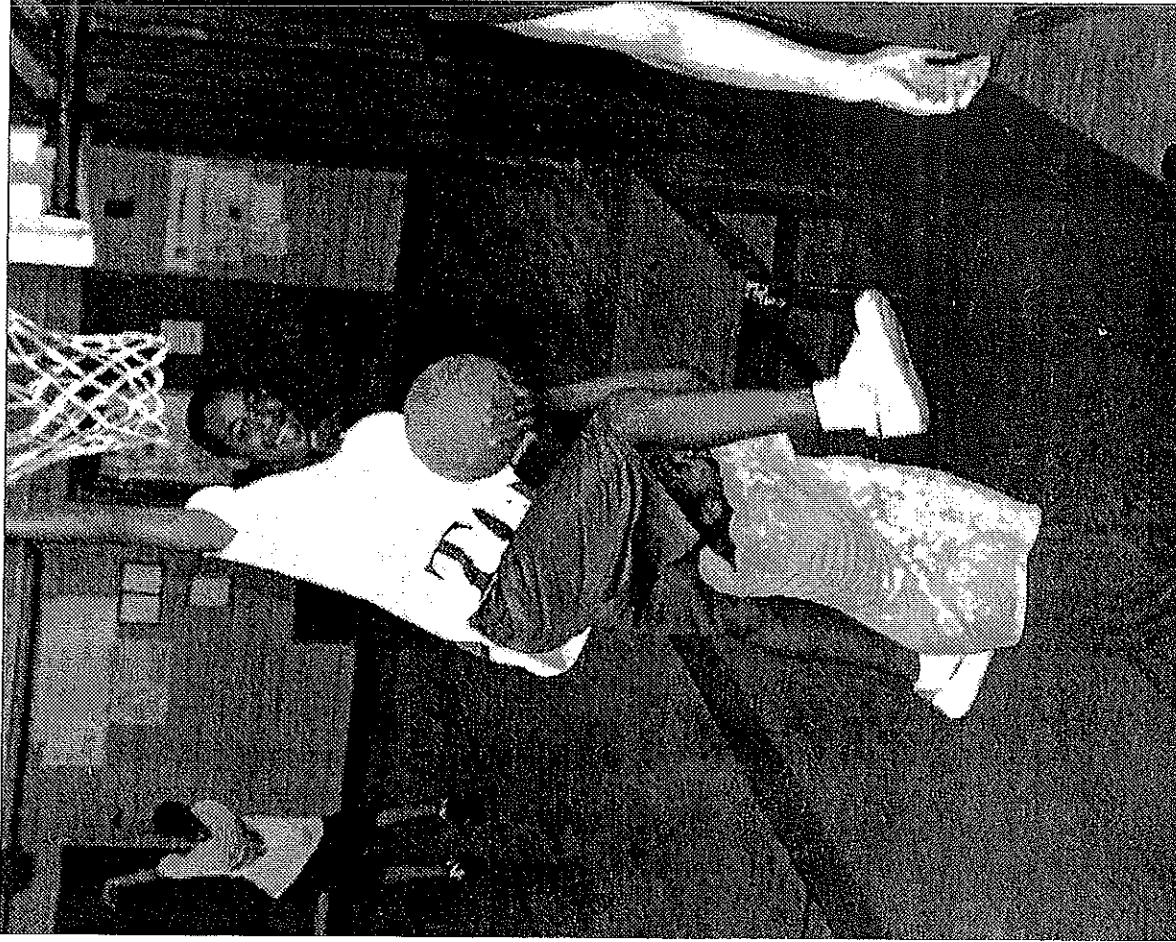


FRIDAY SPORTS

7-21-00

Area Youths Enjoy Summer in the Sun With the 78th Precinct



(Above) Cooperation and teamwork were in evidence as this tandem completed an unorthodox slam dunk Wednesday afternoon at Middle School 51 in Park Slope, which serves as one of the sights for the 78th Precinct's summer youth sports league.

(Below) Participants in the 78th Precinct's Youth Sports League get together for a group photo.

By Josh Simons
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

PARK SLOPE — Dynamite crossovers and cat-like quickness are the perfect 1-2 punch for scoring big in the winning lineup of fun and games offered to an enthusiastic bunch of kids from downtown Brooklyn by the 78th Precinct.

Officers Julio Franco, Iline Delaguila, Alfred Davis and Damaris Simmond got together and started a youth sports league for area youths this year and wanted something entertaining and educational that offered kids a chance to score big and have a great summer.

"We wanted somewhere for the kids to go, something for them to do to strengthen the relationship between the kids and the police so they have a better understanding of what we do on a day-to-day basis," Officer Franco explained.

The Youth Sports League is comprised of 40 local youths (with an average attendance of 30-35 per day) ranging from ages 9 to 15. The cost-free program runs from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday through Friday and lasts throughout the boiling month of July and the dog days of August at Middle School 51 in Park Slope at 4th Street and Fifth Avenue.

The program incorporates a wide array of artistic and recreational activities, ranging from arts and crafts to football, basketball, soccer and handball.

Board games and mingling lead off a typical day. These are followed up by instruction on penal law and casual conversation between the kids and the officers.

The children will then be led downstairs to the gym where they will play basketball and other indoor sports before going outside to play softball or wiffle ball. The kids can cool off with a dip in the pool on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The officers have also provided special trips to the Police Museum and participation in fishing tournaments. Thursday, the children were treated to a Harmony pic-

nic at Prospect Park.

Officer Franco mentioned that the kids also aid the police in improving safety in the neighborhood by picking up glass on the ball fields and cleaning up graffiti.

So far, Franco gives the program two thumbs up.

"It's been great," Franco said with a smile on his face. "They're a great group of kids that get along well."

The kids are also having a terrific time in the program's inaugural season.

Daniel Aubin, 15, and Genesis Alcibar, 11, are both enjoying their summer. Daniel noted, "It's clean, nice, and safe," while Genesis added, "I like to be with the police officers because they take care of me."

"I didn't have a lot of friends and the first day I came to the camp I met a few friends and the cops helped me out with my batting," said Jasmine, another satisfied participant in the program. "They keep me busy through the days instead of sitting at home and watching TV."

With a golden smile on her face, Jacqueline, 9, added "This is the best summer camp I've been to!" Eric, 13, agreed. "It's everything a camp could be."

Officer Franco hopes that other precincts adopt similar programs in their districts while continuing this program throughout the school year. Currently, an Explorer program meets Wednesdays after school and goes on trips and learns about police work.

Perhaps Tito, 14, put it best. "I would like to say that a lot of kids who join the program do it to keep away from trouble. You have a lot of fun, you go to pools, play basketball, football, baseball, any kind of sports activities you want. And it's not too late to join."

For more information on the 78th Precinct's youth sports league, contact Officer Franco at (718)-636-6411 or contact your local youth and community affairs officers.

Photos by Josh Simons



A youth sports league member goes up strong for a layup in the safety of the gymnasium at Middle School 51 in Park Slope.