




COUNCIL MEMBER GALE BREWER Release

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Council Member Gale A. Brewer and Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal Announce *Creating Opportunities for Amsterdam* Program for Youth in Public Housing

NEW YORK, NY- Council Member Gale A. Brewer and Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal announced the Creating Opportunities for Amsterdam (COFA) youth development program at the Amsterdam Houses and Amsterdam Addition on the Upper West Side.

COFA draws on the decades-long strategy of street outreach through targeted, door-to-door recruitment of young people in NYCHA. Participants will be identified through word of mouth by staff, peers, and family members who are currently involved in community programs.

COFA emphasizes both school- and work-based career paths for long-term success and economic security. COFA Navigators will collaborate with partner organizations on complementary services while counseling youth to create and achieve meaningful life plans.

The program is a collaboration between Goddard Riverside, a social services non-profit that supports New Yorkers from early childhood to older adulthood, and Positive Influence, a long-running youth program that started in the Amsterdam Houses. COFA is funded by a \$100,000 grant from Council Member Brewer with an allocation from Speaker Adrienne Adams' Community Safety and Victims Service Initiative, which invests in holistic approaches to public safety, as well as \$125,000 from Assemblymember Rosenthal.

Outreach workers will reach young people who may be orbiting criminal activity, those who are restricting their activities due to health or disconnection, and young adults whose aspirations for education and employment are difficult to realize.

Activities and support will be available six days a week at the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center. The menu of programming includes: job application support; workforce training; paid internships; job fairs and recruitment events; athletics, recreation and arts activities; homework help; school enrollment and college application support; college visits; and more.

Joining COFA as the program evaluator is the nearby Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. A team of two Fordham professors will work to understand engagement and progress of young adults in the program.

"I recognize that the absence of a negative outcome does not ensure that our young people are on track for economic self-sufficiency," said **Council Member Gale A. Brewer**. "COFA will connect youth in public housing — especially those who have been historically marginalized, underserved, and cut off from opportunities — to job experiences, learning opportunities, professional networks, and supportive guidance to create and pursue meaningful life plans."

"Every young person deserves an opportunity to reach their fullest potential regardless of where they were born and who they were born to," said **Roderick Jones, Executive Director of Goddard Riverside**. "I was the young people we seek to engage, and I believe that they can do far better with the right support."

"Improving public safety requires investing holistically in our communities to prevent crime and address underlying drivers of violence," said **Speaker Adrienne Adams**. "Through my new Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative, the Council has provided \$100,000 to be invested in each Council District for local community safety programs that are vital to strengthening our neighborhoods. I thank Council Member Brewer for her leadership in working with Goddard Riverside and Positive Influence to establish the Creating Opportunities for Amsterdam program. These are the types of initiatives that we envisioned supporting through this initiative, because they are critical to creating a safer, healthier, and more equitable city."

"NYCHA's legislative partners and nonprofit institutions are vital to the Authority, always willing to lend resources and support when needed," said **Interim NYCHA CEO Lisa Bova-Hiatt**. "The tens of thousands of young people in public housing are in tremendous need of such support — and we are thrilled that Amsterdam Houses and Amsterdam Addition are continuing the legacy of positive youth programs launched at NYCHA campuses through the Creating Opportunities for Amsterdam initiative."

"Positive influence serves over 1,000 kids in the New York area with competitive sports, physical training, and mentorships," said **Andrew Blacks, founder of Positive Influence**. "Our next chapter will entail bringing the power of the arts to the youth of Amsterdam. It's exciting."

"Fordham's Graduate School of Social Service considers itself fortunate to have built a relationship with Goddard Riverside Community Center and our community neighbors at Amsterdam Houses and Amsterdam Addition," said **Debra M. McPhee, Dean of the Graduate School for Social Service at Fordham University**. "Our partnership with the Center will include providing an evaluation team to understand programmatic outcomes."

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