

# Sanders Hits The Street After Election

BY SASHA AUSTRIE

Delivering on a campaign promise, Councilman James Sanders (D-Laurelton) took to the community to be more visible.

"People want to see you," Sanders said. "They want to squeeze you. They want a relational relationship."

Sanders held court at the Robert Couche Senior Center tackling issues from trees roots upending sidewalks to VA hospital, veterans "not receiving their preferences." According to Sanders, one-third of all homeless people in America are veterans.

"A person has more of a chance of being homeless if they become a veteran," Sanders said.

In regards to The VA Hospital, Sanders was urged by his constituents to speak out.

"I'm not in favor of doing nothing," he said. "I don't lead from the rear."

He reiterated that he has no problem speaking out, but the decision concerning the St. Albans facility is a federal issue.

"We've already lost three hospitals in our community," said Eleanor Kelly, executive director of the senior center. "Who's to say they won't let a fourth one go away."

Nathaniel Johnson, a resident of 181st Street, said he had a big tree in front of his home that causes problems.

"The tree tears up my sidewalk," he said. "I have to maintain it or pay when somebody gets hurt."

Johnson wanted the tree removed.

"I'm an environmentalist," Sanders said.

"You'll never hear me in favor of tearing down a healthy tree."

He said he would advocate for the roots of the tree to be shaved. Sanders said his office would draft a letter to start the process.

Asked about Sanders' visit to the committee Johnson responded, "It is the best idea."

Eileen Watts, a senior on a fixed income, asked the councilman about a new boiler. She said she was told to replace her 20-year-old boiler, which would cost \$20,000. Sanders had an aide take down Watts' information and he vowed to help.

## Teen Unity Saturday In S. Jamaica

BY ALICE SPERI

Part of a series of community-led initiatives in support of Southeast Queens struggling youth, a Teenagers Unity Conference will be held Saturday Nov. 14, at the IS 9 Auditorium.

The day-long event is presented by the Brotherhood Foundation and endorsed by local organizations, businesses and individuals, from programs active against teen violence like Life Camp and NOI Youth, to neighborhood liquor stores, to the parents of victims of violence like Sean Bell and Kevin Miller, the 13-year old shot to death in Cambria Heights last month.

The conference will consist of a series of workshops targeting some of the most widely perceived problems and needs of

He also invited Watts to come to his office have lawyers look at her reverse mortgage paperwork to make sure it was all squared away.

Another constituent who'd been trying to have a meeting with Sanders since April slowly ambled in. She was hit with building violations when she converted her basement into a living space. She said she could no longer climb stairs so she rents the first floor of her home and lived in the basement.

Sanders said her case was a two-fold

process. Firstly, he'd try to alleviate the violation fines and then make her home handicap accessible.

Sanders said the visit to the senior center is just one of the first throughout the district. He plans to visit homes and churches as well.

"Wherever we can get people to come," he said. "These types of meetings help me find out what my people are doing."

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Jamaica's youth, from drug abuse and teen pregnancy, to unemployment and crime. The organizers hope to provide students with an opportunity to discuss in a safe space issues that affect them daily. Workshops include conflict mediation to solve the recurrent fights outside local schools, to "what to do when stopped by the police," as the conference's flier promotes.

The event will also include panels on employment opportunities and entrepreneurial skill-building as an alternative to crime, with lessons on creating independent record labels, a skill highly sought in a community which has raised a remarkable number of successful rappers, DJs and music professionals.

To keep the young participants engaged, the day will conclude with a tal-

ent show with open mic, hip-hop and fashion exhibits.

The event is scheduled to run from 1-8 p.m. and the hosting auditorium is located at 108-35 167th St. in Jamaica.

"Come out to this event," Greg X, of the Brotherhood Foundation said last Saturday, promoting the event at a rally against street violence organized in Southeast Queens. "Not sending your kids to this is like turning down a free dinner."

The conference is free and open to the public. Though it is tailored to the needs of teenagers, everyone is welcome to join and parents and educators are especially encouraged to attend.

Greg X repeated the open invitation at a different community meeting tonight. "It's for everyone, 8 to 80," he said.

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