

Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York

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Renovated Gymnasium at Frederick E. Samuel Houses in Harlem: Funding Through Seized Narcotics Proceeds

Ceremony and community basketball game, 3 p.m. today

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton, Frederick J. Watts, Executive Director of New York City's Police Athletic League (PAL), and Gerald Nelson, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Vice President for Security, announced the unveiling of a newly refurbished gymnasium at the Frederick E. Samuel Houses, a New York City Housing Authority development in the Harlem section of Manhattan.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at 3 p.m. today in the Frederick E. Samuel Community Center, located at 669 Lenox Ave. The refurbished gymnasium features a new scoreboard and refinished floors. Financial support is derived from drug trafficking proceeds obtained during criminal prosecutions by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor.

Following the ceremony, a PAL "Cops & Kids" basketball game is scheduled to take place between youth that play for the Frederick E. Samuel Houses Community Center basketball team and officers from the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) 32nd Precinct and Police Service Area 6.

The Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office and the NYPD's 32nd Precinct began an investigation into drug sales in the vicinity of the housing development in July of 2015 in response to community complaints of drug dealing and violence in the area. During the investigation, the defendants made approximately 50 sales of crack cocaine to undercover NYPD officers. Sales took place between 137th and 142nd streets near 7th and Lenox avenues and involved approximately four to 10 individual "zips" of crack cocaine each.

A total of 10 defendants were arrested in February of 2016, five of whom shared one cell phone to make sales. Four defendants were sentenced to varying amounts of jail time and four are awaiting sentencing. Cases against the remaining two are pending.

By supporting recreational programs, the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office joins in a cooperative effort to strengthen the community in the wake of enforcement activity and to build relationships between young people and law enforcement. This program is the result of a successful collaboration between law enforcement, PAL, and NYCHA, as well as community members dedicated to protecting the safety of residents and improving the quality of life for the city's youth.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, "It is a pleasure to use the proceeds of drug crimes to purchase new athletic equipment for the young people of Frederick E. Samuel Houses and to support fun recreational opportunities. We are happy to help create better spaces for young people to thrive. We look forward to participating in many future programs with the Police Athletic League and all of our partner agencies that benefit the youth of New York City."

"Using seized drug money, we are thrilled to deliver this renovated gym back to the community we serve—with the help of the Police Athletic League and the Special Narcotics Prosecutor," said Police Commissioner William J. Bratton. "It is my hope this facility can help us in continuing to build meaningful relationships with the residents of Harlem, both on and off the court."

PAL Executive Director Frederick J. Watts said, "I am excited that the Special Narcotics Prosecutor continues her office's great partnership with PAL, supporting our role in bringing quality programs to community youth. PAL's collaboration with Ms. Brennan's office, the NYPD, and NYCHA, not only promotes crime prevention, but builds positive relationships between law enforcement and the community."

"This new gymnasium is a powerful example of how collaboration between NYCHA and law enforcement is making neighborhoods safer and more connected," said NYCHA VP for Public Safety Gerald Nelson. "With this major investment, ill-gotten gains have been repurposed for the good of the community. This vibrant public space – an invaluable resource for residents, just in time for summer – will bring people together, encourage positivity, and strengthen the community."

New York City's Police Athletic League is the first and finest civilian-run PAL in the country. Founded in 1914, PAL has served the city's young people for over 100 years. PAL provides recreational, educational, cultural and social activities to 35,000 boys and girls annually. It is also the city's largest, independent, nonprofit youth organization. For more information, please visit www.palnyc.org.