

Basketball tournament brings Brooklyn youth and cops together

BY REECE T. WILLIAMS

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Red Hook Housing Authority youth and police officers from the 76th Precinct played in a basketball tournament held at the Joseph Miccio Community Center on Saturday. (REECE T. WILLIAMS/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

Brooklyn youth and NYPD cops used an oldtime city tradition to form a connection Saturday — coming together on the hardwood to play some hoops.

The games were part of a community-organized tournament at the Joseph Miccio Community Center in Red Hook, intended to strengthen relations between law enforcement and kids living in public housing.

Cops and their young counterparts joined up on the same teams.

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“We need to build up the relationship with the cops,” said Red Hook resident Janet Andrews, who works to organize community events with City Councilman Carlos Menchaca.



The games were intended to strengthen relations between law enforcement and kids living in public housing. (REECE T. WILLIAMS/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

The idea for the tournament came from middle school students who are part of the Red Hook Initiative, a local afterschool program. Students were asked to propose a change they would like to see in their community.

“This is really about youth-led initiative,” said Menchaca, who participated in Saturday’s tournament.

Quwan Smith, 20, lives in the apartment complex. He said that officers and youth need to build trust. And Officer Ahmed Mobley of the 76th Precinct said, “No matter what’s going on in society, we need to team up.”

Funding for the tournament came from a portion of the district’s budget allocated for its chapter of Street Soccer USA — a community-based sports program that intends to develop leadership skills in adolescents.

The day featured dance performances, and a visit from two Brooklyn Nets dancers. But the main event was the games.

“I just want to play ball,” said one officer.

“The goal is not to get hurt,” laughed Mobley.

“It feels like a challenge to be playing against older people,” said 10-year-old Nirel Bethune, a student at PAVE Academy Charter School.

Andrews said the tournament was needed.

“If you’re going to be patrolling this community, you need to know us,” she said. “We need to know you.”

Tequan Bekka — the center’s program director — said he’s optimistic the event will help thaw relations between the community and cops.

“This is something that the kids are going to remember,” he said, adding that when the young residents happen to see the officers working the beat, they’ll be more likely to say, “Hey. What’s up? I played with you.”

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