

Queens groups win volunteer grants

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Ten groups from Queens schools and neighborhoods will be able to move forward with plans aimed at improving their communities, thanks to a prize awarded by the Citizens Committee for New York City.

The volunteer groups were winners of the fall 2009 New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods Award, which has a cash prize valued at between \$500 and \$3000.

"From neighbors putting together a West African cultural arts program in Rochdale Village to students building a school garden in Astoria, we are investing in New Yorkers who put in sweat equity to transform their neighborhoods," said Peter H. Kostmayer, CEO of Citizens Committee for New York City.

Among the prize recipients was P.S. 47 in Broad Channel, whose Green Team will transform their schoolyard into an urban vegetable garden. Their harvest will go towards supplying their cooking club, and excess produce will be sold in a "Greenmarket Fundraiser."

P.S. 161, the Arthur Ashe School in Jamaica, plans on using the award to purchase a library's worth of books, in order to

start up its Book Buddy Group. This plan will have school representatives volunteer to read to younger students who struggle with reading. The school plans on purchasing books in English, Spanish, Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali.

Other recipients in Queens were the 46th Avenue Beautification Committee, Ballet International Africans, Escuela de Padres, Holistic Energy Arts to Liberate Lyfe, Khadijah's Caravan, Northeastern Towers Tenant Association, P.S. 85 the Judge Charles J. Vallone School in Astoria and Rego Park Green Alliance.

In addition to the cash prizes, award recipients will also get one-on-one assistance and free access to the Community Resource Center, where digital cameras and other electronic equipment will be available to them.

Overall, 65 different groups throughout the city received the prize for fall 2009.

Any New Yorker with an idea for how to improve his or her own neighborhood is welcome to apply for a spring 2010 grant from the committee. The deadline to apply is Sunday, March 14.

For more information about the grants or how to apply, call 212-822-9580, or e-mail grants@citizensnyc.org.

