



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## State Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein Secures \$300,000 Grant for Operation SNUG, an Innovative Gun and Gang Violence Prevention Program for The Bronx

JEFFREY D. KLEIN February 7, 2014

| ISSUE: **CRIME, HEALTH, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, GUN CONTROL, CHILDREN**



**BRONX** - Today a cutting-edge statewide gun and gang violence prevention program – Operation SNUG – received a \$300,000 award from State Senator Jeff Klein to operate in The Bronx’s Jacobi Medical Center. The hospital also generously chipped in another \$50,000 to the anti-gun violence effort.

Operation SNUG – *guns spelled backwards* – is an aggressive, on the ground program that brings reformed gang members and criminals to hotbed street corners to teach their hard-learned lessons to troubled youths. Acting as “violence interrupters” these individuals will be on the front lines, facing down

potentially violent confrontations in some of New York City's toughest neighborhoods. Expanding on the program's past success, violence interrupters will be on the ground in the Bronx to mediate disputes before guns are drawn.

Senator Klein was the only elected official in New York City to secure SNUG funding for his district in 2014. The new program builds on the anti-gun momentum Senator Klein began last year when he co-authored and helped passed the NY SAFE Act, a new law which finally gives New York the toughest gun laws in the country.

"I'm proud that I was able to deliver \$300,000 to the people in the Bronx who need this program the most. SNUG's aggressive and proven approach makes it clear to our young people that guns and gang violence do not need to be a way of life," said **Senator Klein**. "Our violence interrupters can reach these kids in a way that no one else can. Their inspiring stories teach kids that gun violence is not worth the tragedy and jail time that too often tear apart our communities. This initiative, along with the NY SAFE Act, are essential tools in our fight to eliminate gun violence," **Senator Klein added**.

The state's Division of Criminal Services (DCJS) selected Jacobi Medical Center Auxiliary, Inc. to run the Operation SNUG program. Thanks to Senator Klein's advocacy, the Bronx was one of only seven areas selected across the state for part of \$2.18 million in funding for the initiative this year.

The funds present an exciting opportunity for Jacobi Medical Center to take an active role in the community it serves.

"More and more hospitals have to operate without walls. The funds we have obtained through DCJS and Senator Klein's office will allow us to have a community based Injury Prevention program. Now our Auxiliary will be able to help patients in many more ways than ever before. Additional resources including violence interrupters, focused recreational programs, clinical social work intervention and follow-up will provide us with the opportunity to take preemptive measures and ensure that young adults are safe from violence" said **William P. Walsh, Executive Director of Jacobi Medical Center and North Central**

## **Bronx Hospital.**

Violence interrupters will target areas that are known to police as breeding grounds of violence, places where, unfortunately, problems have in the past been solved by guns.

“As a doctor, I have seen too many kids killed or maimed for life as a result of the senseless destruction of bullets. I became an activist because treating wounds just wasn’t enough, we need to attack this problem at its source. Thanks to this DCJS grant and Senator Klein’s efforts, we’ll be able to do just that.

Approaching the gun violence epidemic with a community-centered violence prevention program is the most effective way of ensuring these kids never get injured or have to cross through the doors of our Emergency Room.” **said Dr. Sheldon Teperman; Trauma Service Director and Board Member of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence.**

“Empirical evidence shows that hospital-based interventions are extremely effective. This new program and the research it produces will allow us not only to gain an insight to those who are affected by gun violence but also to make an impact on these individuals lives,” added **Dr. Stephen Blumberg.**

The program could shield another mother from the agony that **Elizabeth Thompson** went through when her 19-year-old son, Shawn Lamont Williams, was fatally shot nearby her Bronx home.

“As a mother who has lost a child, I’m doing everything in my power to prevent another parent from enduring the same pain I have experienced. A Bronx SNUG program may be too late for my son, but if it saves one young person’s life it’s worth every penny. Thank you Senator Klein for listening ” said **Elizabeth Thompson, member of North Central Bronx Hospital’s Community Advisory Board and a member of the North Bronx/Westchester Chapter of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc.**

Some of the violence interrupters will be recruited by a local pastor, who has experience in counseling high risk youth.

“This is a very significant program that we are bringing to The Bronx. In my line of work I eulogize a lot of young men from street violence. I believe that this is a way that we can save lives. This program will be a definite blessing to the community,” said **Rev. Joseph Gooding of Fellowship Tabernacle Ministries**.

Operation SNUG was heralded by Community Precinct Councils across the borough, Community Board No. 10 and New Yorkers Against Gun Violence.

“This program complements the great work of the District Attorney, the New York Foundling, the Parole Bureau and the social services agencies provide. SNUG is a program that interfaces directly with our problem youths at the time of serious conflicts for the purpose of stopping violence before it escalates. We thank Senator Klein for this initiative and I’m honored to be part of the team,” said **Joseph Thompson, president of the 49<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council**.

"Once again Senator Klein hits it out of the park, along with Jacobi Medical Center. This can be a great way for NYPD to fight crime before it happens. The SNUG program will be an opportunity for reformed criminals to give back to their Bronx communities. Who better to help fight crime than people who lived it and learned from it? There are many senseless shootings that occur and innocent children get injured or die from. I am happy that the Senator asked me to be a part of it,"said **Community Board No. 10 Chairman John Marano**.

"I am very excited to see this proven program brought into the Bronx," **Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda (D-Bronx) said**. "This program takes aim at our community's most vulnerable, our youth. I plan on working diligently with Senator Klein to continue to bring programs and legislation that will put a stop to gun violence."

"This program is another step in the right direction toward making the Bronx safer for all its residents and families. I am happy to see the positive changes it will bring to our communities through proactive

approaches, guidance and education,” **said Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj (D-Bronx).**

“While crime in the Bronx is at an all-time low, we have been witness to wave after wave of violence and the ill effects of illegal guns in our communities. I am proud to join Senator Klein and Jacobi in announcing this timely and much needed Operation SNUG funding to provide much needed support to victims and their families and to further reduce gun violence in our Borough,” **said Assemblyman Marcos Crespo (D-Bronx).**

**New Yorkers Against Gun Violence Executive Director Leah Barrett added,** "New Yorkers Against Gun Violence has worked for 20 years to educate New York youth and community members about gun violence and how to prevent and reduce it. We look forward to working with SNUG in the Bronx to help young people solve problems without resorting to guns and empower them to become advocates for gun violence prevention and productive members of their communities."

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