

BRONX *Times*

July 10, 2008



Photo courtesy of John Marino

P.S. 97 students enjoy one of the features of a new playground they received from Out2Play last year. The organization will build 11 more such facilities before the end of the year as part of their mission to provide play spaces to economically disadvantaged New York public schools.

Playgrounds planned for 11 schools

BY JENI ASABA

Recess will take on a new meaning for thousands of Bronx youth when they return to their unexpected, state of the art school playgrounds this fall.

Out2Play, a non-profit that works to build play spaces at economically disadvantaged New York City public schools, will complete new playgrounds at 11 Bronx facilities by the end of the year.

"The future of the Bronx lies in the bright future of our children, and it's important to provide them with every opportunity for a meaningful and well-rounded learning experience," Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. said.

Carrion, along with Council Members Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Maria Baez, Joel Rivera and Jimmy Vacca, is providing

financial support for the projects.

"These new playgrounds will enhance and enrich the lives of many school children, and I'm thrilled to support Out2Play in this gift to the community," Carrion continued.

Councilman Joel Rivera agreed, but in addition to beautiful new spaces, focused in on the health issues addressed through the ambitious new endeavor.

"The Bronx youth obesity rates are the highest in the five boroughs. One of the simplest ways to combat this issue is to encourage kids to be physically active. But if there isn't any available open space for them to play, this doesn't work."

Each recipient school will receive a variety of outdoor amenities which could include play structures with slides and monkey bars, basketball courts, kickball diamonds, chess tables, benches and more.

"This is a big to do for us, when you have nothing," P.S. 307 principal Luisa Pineiro Fuentes said, explaining that while the school doesn't have enough room for a full playground on their lot, Out2Play is creating a garden space in an unused area adjacent to the school.

"We grow butterflies and we grow lady bugs and now we'll have a place to release them," she said.

Fuentes said she's been working with Out2Play to design the space for several months. The final plans include planters, benches, a cobblestone walkway and a painted wall puzzle. "So the children are not just outside getting fresh air, but they're also engaged in an activity," she explained.

Also anticipating the complete redesign of his own space is P.S. 279 principal James Waslawski.

"We're very excited to have different play spaces for kids in different age groups," he commented about a commodity for his kindergarten through eighth grade students. "It'll cater to

different types of sports that we don't typically play."

Also on the list to receive new playgrounds are P.S. 32, P.S. 65, P.S. 73, P.S. 92, P.S. 96, P.S. 107, P.S. 170, P.S. 226 and P.S. 396.

"I am pleased to support Out 2 Play's mission of enhancing the quality of life of these children and providing them with both health benefits and educational opportunities," Rivera said.

Out2Play is currently implementing the citywide program to restore the City's school playground system.