

children's **PRESS** LINE

This is the second in a series of reports in Bronx Boro News on issues that affect kids by the young journalists of Children's PressLine, which gives kids an opportunity to represent themselves in the media. The program trains young people, ages 8-18, to interview their peers on issues that directly affect them and publishes these stories in newspapers and on websites. For more information or to submit story ideas, visit www.cplmedia.org.

BACKTALK

KIDS SPEAK, OFFICIALS RESPOND

THE ISSUE

Make bodegas stop selling cigarettes to little children



"There's a bodega on every corner in my neighborhood. They all sell cigarettes. That's not the problem. The problem is they sell them to little kids. I would like for it to stop. I would like for these stores to ask for ID before they sell cigarettes. They don't only sell packs; they sell 'loosies.'"

Kore'h Williams, 15, Highbridge, Bronx

THE RESPONSE



"It's an enormous problem. The Department of Consumer Affairs welcomes tips on this kind of illegal activity. Call 311 to make a complaint. When we get complaints, we send an inspector out. The proprietor of the business could be given a violation. You lose your license to sell tobacco by two violations."

For the last 13 years, the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs has had the nation's largest youth undercover initiative.

Young people of 15 and 17 who've taken the pledge not to smoke can join our youth enforcement squad for \$8.50 an hour.

Apply to become a member of the squad. Our job vacancy notice is online at www.NYC.GOV/consumers.

Search "youth tobacco enforcement." You'll see a job vacancy notice under "career opportunities."

Deputy Commissioner of External Affairs Fran Freedman, N.Y.C. Department of Consumer Affairs



Do you want your voice heard in BackTalk? Check out: www.cplmedia.org/backtalk

Parched in the Bronx



Borough gets just one free fountain

BY SYDNEY FUSTO, SAMIRA ABDALLAH AND HENRY WU

THE BRONX is thirsty.

The city's new Water on the Go program is touring the five boroughs, providing New Yorkers with free water-bottle refills on sweltering-hot summer days.

Ten portable fountains, each with several faucets, rotate between public spaces and areas with heavy foot traffic.

But the Bronx is getting a Bronx cheer.

Only one of the free water stations has made it to the Bronx, with the fountains available there for only four days this month, while they're available in Manhattan for 24 days.

"Unfortunately, our city government focuses more on Manhattan than on the outer boroughs," said City Councilman Oliver Koppell (D-Riverdale).

Water on the Go was created to encourage people to switch from sugar-packed beverages such as soda to natural, calorie-free water.

"Excess sugar intake during the summer when you are in need of more fluid will hasten your chances of getting dehydrated," said Dr. Ernest Patti, an emergency room physician at St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx.

The fountains also help decrease pollution caused by unrecycled water bottles by giving people a free fillup.

"Only 20% of [water bottles] actually get recycled, and 80% end up to be waste," said Water on the Go volunteer Jason Sarzosa.



Jonathan Guzman (top photo) sips water at Water on the Go fountain, part of free program to fight dehydration. Dr. Ernest Patti of St. Barnabas Hospital checks intravenous solution, which is used to treat severe dehydration. Photos by Sarah Flagg and Najwa Stanford/CPL Media

In July, a Water on the Go fountain appears every Tuesday at Bronx Borough Hall.

But in Manhattan, areas such as Time Square, Union Square and Battery Park receive fountains numerous times a week.

Department of Environmental Protection spokesman Farrell Sklerov said the locations were selected based on foot traffic and the availability of public plazas and open spaces.

But with the Bronx's higher obesity rate compared to the rest of the city, doctors in the borough urged youths to depend on water to quench their summer thirst.

"The possibility of being overweight in New York City is 86% higher in the Bronx than in Manhattan," said Andrew Rundle, associate professor of epidemiology at Columbia University.

Many Bronx residents say the borough should be equally included in the Water on

the Go program.

"It's not fair that there is not as much free water in the Bronx," said Bronx resident Christelle Manan, 17. "There are equally enough people here who deserve it here, too."

Manhattan has many more tourist attractions, which contribute to the amount of traffic.

"If the Bronx has a public program or a special event and there are interested volunteers, we will be happy to expand the program to those areas," said DEP's Sklerov.

After learning about the lack of Water on the Go fountains in the Bronx, Koppell said he would contact city officials to find out why the Bronx isn't getting its thirst quenched.

Additional reporting by Dakota London, James Norwood, Dejanla Cotton-Samuel, Geneva Ansley-Cornic, Annabel Estrella, Jamilah Daniels and Raulak Amanna