



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services Commits \$150,000 to Yonkers SNUG Program

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS November 15, 2011

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(Yonkers) - A successful violence prevention program in Yonkers received welcome news from the State today. At a press conference, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D/WF/I – 35th District) announced that the Yonkers Family YMCA will receive \$150,000 from the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services to keep Project SNUG running in Yonkers. The program was in jeopardy of shutting down this year due to lack of funding but has been credited by the Yonkers Police Department with helping to reduce shootings in the city by

39%.

Senator Stewart-Cousins, who initially brought Project SNUG to Yonkers, was joined at the press conference by Yonkers Police Commissioner Edmund Hartnett, YMCA Executive Director Shawyn Howard and the Yonkers SNUG workers.

“Project SNUG has helped the City make great progress, and we did not want to take a step back. The Commissioner, Executive Director, SNUG workers and I have been advocating the need to continue this program all year, and this is the answer to our call,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “Thanks to Governor Cuomo and the Department of Criminal Justice Services, Operation SNUG can continue to prevent violence in Yonkers and help build our community. I would also like to thank Commissioner Hartnett, Executive Director Shawyn Howard and the SNUG workers for their efforts and commitment on behalf of the youth in our city.”

Modeled after the Ceasefire Program in Chicago, Project SNUG was created in 2009 by the New York State Senate with a \$4 million allocation in the State budget. This funding was distributed to targeted communities in New York State and Senator Stewart-Cousins was able to secure \$250,000 to bring the program to the City of Yonkers. After a competitive process, the Yonkers Family YMCA was chosen to administer the program.

Described as a frontline violence prevention initiative, SNUG reaches out directly to at-risk youth. SNUG violence interrupters are on call every night to respond to and intervene in situations that could result in violence or escalate. The SNUG workers in Yonkers are mostly ex-offenders who have turned their lives around after serving time.

In just one year of operation, the Yonkers Police Department says SNUG has already made an impact.

"The SNUG program has been a welcome addition to our multi-faceted strategy to address shootings in Yonkers. Year to date, shooting incidents are down citywide by 39%; 17 this year versus 28 last year. Shootings in the SNUG zone are down even more dramatically," said Yonkers Police Commissioner Edmund Hartnett. "I believe that SNUG has contributed significantly to this reduction and I commend the SNUG workers for their commitment to preventing gun violence among our young people. I also thank Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins for her leadership in this very important initiative."

"The SNUG Program has had such a positive influence on our community, so I am thrilled that we will be able to continue operating," said Shawyn Howard, Executive Director of the Yonkers Family YMCA. "This funding will help keep Project SNUG in Yonkers at least into next year. I would like to thank Governor Cuomo and DCJS for recognizing the gains that we have made through this program and allowing us to continue to reduce violence among our youth. These gains would not be possible without the commitment of our SNUG workers or the partnership of the Yonkers Police Department and Commissioner Ed Hartnett, so I would like to thank them as well. And finally, I would like to thank Senator Stewart-Cousins who brought the program here, and who has been our champion from day one. I look forward to continue working with everyone involved to move our community forward."

This year, despite the urging of Senator Stewart-Cousins and her Democratic colleagues, the New York Senate Majority failed to reinstitute funding for the SNUG Program in the Executive Budget. As the initial \$250,000 allocation for the Yonkers program dwindled, Senator Stewart-Cousins, Commissioner Hartnett and Executive Director Shawyn Howard advocated the importance of continuing this program in Yonkers to Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders. In a meeting with Governor Cuomo, Senator Stewart-Cousins made a personal appeal on behalf of SNUG, informing the Governor of the program's success in Yonkers and expressing the need to keep it going. A few weeks later, the Department of

Criminal Justice Services made a commitment of \$150,000 to continue the program in the City.

“Governor Cuomo clearly recognized that SNUG was working for Yonkers and that it must continue, so we are grateful for all of his efforts. This will not only help us continue to reduce violence in our City, but it will keep these committed SNUG workers, who have turned their lives around to make sure our youth do not make the same mistakes they did, working to make the community better. This is an all-around good thing,” concluded Senator Stewart-Cousins.

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