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**DEP Announces Innovative Fire Hydrant Abuse Prevention Program**

**"HEAT" Will Take Neighborhood Approach To Curbing Fire Hydrant Abuse**

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has partnered with Alianza Dominicana, the well known Washington Heights community organization, to create an innovative fire hydrant abuse prevention program called HEAT (Hydrant Education Action Team), Commissioner Emily Lloyd of DEP announced today. Beginning today, twenty youth educators will distribute information outside subway stations and parks, at neighborhood events, and on local streets where residents open fire hydrants on hot days, often without realizing the possible consequences for fire-fighting, domestic water use, and the safety of young children.

HEAT will focus on three community boards with historically high rates of fire hydrant abuse: Manhattan Community Board 12 (Washington Heights and Inwood), Bronx Community Board 4 (Mt. Eden, Highbridge, Concourse Village and Concourse) and Bronx Community Board 5 (Fordham, Bathgate, Morris Heights, University Heights and Mt Hope). If the program is successful this year, it will be expanded to other neighborhoods in the future.

The young people who will participate in HEAT were funded in part as summer youth workers through the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development. The students, who are between the ages of 14 and 21, will work in two groups, each with a supervisor who will plan the group's activities based on weather, scheduled events in each community and patterns observed in the course of the outreach work. HEAT participants will wear red t-shirts and most are bilingual in Spanish and English.

"We fully appreciate the desire of New Yorkers to cool off when it's hot, but many New Yorkers are not aware of the potentially serious consequences of fire hydrant abuse," said Commissioner Lloyd. "We believe HEAT's neighborhood approach is a particularly appropriate way to get this message out, because the consequences of hydrant abuse are local. Water pressure drops in the immediate area around an open hydrant and neighborhood children will be at risk from playing in the street. HEAT will also provide people with important information about pools, cooling

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centers and sprinklers throughout the City."

"For close to 20 years, Alianza Dominicana has been partnering with the City to engage young people in the resolution of critical problems in the community," said Moises Perez, Executive Director of Alianza Dominicana. "It is our expectation that the young people that are heading the hydrant education program this summer will have an impact beyond Washington Heights into the entire City."

HEAT educators received training about the history and functioning of New York City's water supply system and about the problems associated with illegally opening fire hydrants. They also role played, practiced how to communicate hydrant issues in a way that would engage their peers, and learned conflict resolution strategies. HEAT team members will also provide information about obtaining sprinkler caps for the supervised, appropriate use of City fire hydrants, and about other ways people can cool off on hot days, including at New York City Department of Parks and Recreation pools and sprinklers.

The unauthorized opening of New York City fire hydrants is illegal, and often spikes during heat waves. Opened hydrants lower water pressure, cause problems at hospitals and medical facilities and reduce the flow of water needed to fight fires. Opening a hydrant without a spray cap can result in fines of up to \$1000, imprisonment for up to 30 days, or both.

The consequences of opening hydrants can be particularly severe in Washington Heights where water is mechanically pumped because of the area's relatively high elevation. In contrast, most of New York City's water mains convey drinking water to homes and businesses using gravity and natural water pressure.

One illegally opened fire hydrant, running full for one minute consumes the same amount of water used to run 400 shower heads. In an hour, a single illegally opened hydrant wastes enough water to fill an Olympic size swimming pool.

Residents of the community boards where the initiative is being piloted can call 311 to request a presentation or more information. All New Yorkers should call 311 to report open fire hydrants.

For more information on HEAT, fire hydrant abuse or DEP, visit [nyc.gov/dep](http://nyc.gov/dep).