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QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S 11th ANNUAL
"SAY YES TO TENNIS, NO TO VIOLENCE" DAY
AT USTA NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER

650 Far Rockaway Public School Students Attend Annual Public-Private Event

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by former Mayor David N. Dinkins, the United States Tennis Association (USTA) and the New York Junior Tennis League, today hosted more than 650 Far Rockaway public school students at the District Attorney's 11th annual "Say Yes to Tennis - No to Violence" Day which was held at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center – the nation's largest public tennis facility and the home of the U.S. Open – in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

District Attorney Brown said, "As we enter our second decade of providing the youth of Far Rockaway with a positive alternative to the deadly culture of gun violence which has permeated their lives on an almost daily basis, our challenge and goal is to teach them that tennis is a great sport with important lessons for the game of life. Learning now the principles of fair play and self-control on a tennis court may very well keep them from later on becoming one of life's casualties in a court of law."

The day-long outing at the USTA National Tennis Center culminates the District Attorney's year-long STAR (Straight Talk About Risks) Track anti-violence program. As part of the program, thirty-five members of the District Attorney's Office and eight members of the New York City Corporation Counsel's Office – including Queens Chief Jennifer Gilroy Ruiz – have visited nine Far Rockaway schools – from elementary through high school – throughout the school year to talk about the risks of guns, drugs, gangs and how to make the right choices. The program's curriculum is designed to drive down the crime rate and build up self-esteem, confidence and the quality of life for the students.

The students are enrolled in nine public schools in Far Rockaway. The schools include: Far Rockaway High School, Middle School 53, and Public Schools 42, 43, 104, 106, 197, 215 and 333 which enroll more than 7,000 students in grades four to twelve.

Highlights of today's event for the students included professional tennis players sharing tennis tips, instructional lessons, visits from the New York Cyclones mascot, Sandy the Seagull, the New York Islanders mascot, Sparky the Dragon, and an awards ceremony, which recognized the successes of various students who participated in the STAR Track program.

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Among today's invited guests were NYPD Detective Lieutenant Steven D. McDonald, who was shot and paralyzed by a fifteen-year-old gunman more than twenty years ago; NYPD Assistant Chief Diana L. Pizzuti, Commander of Patrol Borough Queens North, and New York State Assemblywoman Audrey I. Pheffer.

The event was made possible by the following groups: USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, USTA, USTA Eastern Section, the New York Junior Tennis League, Modell's Sporting Goods, The Corporate Edge, Office of Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, Queens Borough Public Library, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, New York City Police Department, New York City Department of Transportation, New York City Office of Emergency Management, United States Census Bureau, S.U.N.Y. Recruitment Center, C.U.N.Y. LaGuardia Community College, New York Mets, New York Islanders, Brooklyn Cyclones, New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, Corona Volunteer Ambulance and Junior High School 216Q.

The USTA is the national governing body for the sport of tennis in the United States and the leader in promoting and developing the growth of tennis at every level – from local communities to the highest level of the professional game. It owns and operates the U.S. Open, the largest annually attended sporting event in the world, and launched the U.S. Open Series linking 10 summer tournaments to the U.S. Open. A not-for-profit organization with more than 665,000 members, the USTA invests 100 percent of its proceeds in growing the game. In addition it owns 94 Pro Circuit events throughout the United States, and selects the teams for the Davis Cup, Fed Cup, Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The students received t-shirts donated by Modell's and goodie bags containing items donated by the New York City Department of Transportation and Office of Emergency Management, the Queens Borough Public Library, the U.S. Census Bureau, the State University of New York Recruitment Center, City University of New York LaGuardia Community College, the New York Islanders and New Yorkers Against Gun Violence.

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Note to Editors: E-version of this press release posted at www.queensda.org.