



Green Carts Pushing Into the Market

By Bill Weisbrod

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In some Bronx neighborhoods getting fresh fruits and vegetables is as easy as a walk to the corner. But in others, it might be easier digging for gold.

The New York City Department of Health, food company Karp Resources and Bronx-based nonprofit WHEDco have come together to try to change that problem by creating the NYC Green Cart program.

The program licenses city residents to set up their own fruit and vegetable stands in neighborhoods that are traditionally devoid of fresh produce options. On Tuesday, March 15, Karp and WHEDco held a seminar on Intervale Avenue to newly licensed Green Cart vendors about how to best run their carts.

Palma Hinds is a bakery supervisor at a Whole Foods in Manhattan, but lives off Third Avenue in the Bronx. She is frustrated with the lack of fresh produce available in her area. She was one of the approximately ten prospective Green Cart owners who attended the seminar.

"I'm excited about it. In the community I live in there's not a lot of freshness," Said Hinds, who plans to use the Hunts Point Market a source for her Green Cart. "I want to go all organic, and they have organic foods."

Thomas Francis, who is currently on injury compensation from his job in the laundry center at Montefiore hospital, read about the Green Cart program and since he had some extra time on his hands, decided to pursue it.

Francis also coaches a youth track team in Co-op City, so he sees the Green Cart program as a way to both teach his team about nutrition and business.

"We're affiliated with the New York Roadrunners, and they talk a lot about nutrition," Francis said. "This is going to serve as an experience to get them experience with marketing and a business at an early age."

After a prospective Green Kart owner gets his or her food vendors license, they have to buy the cart, which costs about \$1,800. The people at Wednesday's seminar had begun their application processes in the fall, so the only complaint about the program so far is that it could be streamlined.

There are about 400 Green Carts currently active in the city. The majority are located in the Bronx. Cassandra Flechsig of Karp ran the seminar and manages the Green Cart program.

The program discourages Green Cart vendors from setting up shop near already established food sellers, so they won't create any resentment in neighborhoods. Her discussion on Wednesday covered that, as well as ways to optimize the business.

"We go over the paperwork, how to identify a location, where to get produce, and how not to get a violation," Flechsig said.