

# Walk against child abuse

## WHEDCo's Grand Concourse march generates awareness

BY ADAM BERMUDEZ

On April 3, a group of Bronx youth stood up and took a stand on abuse faced by their peers.

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation's Walk For Children featured a march to generate awareness of child abuse in the forms of neglect and unfair punishment.

Students, youth workers, parents, WHEDCo representatives and community members began walking at PS/MS 218, at 1220 Gerard Avenue, and followed a route along the Grand Concourse to the courthouse, and finally back to the school.

The non-profit Bronx based organization dedicated to the economic advancement of low-income women and families, partnered with Prevent Child Abuse New York to host the event.

Davon Russell, WHEDCo Vice President of Programs, spoke of the march's goal to create a more expansive understanding of child abuse in the Bronx.

"We hope to encourage people

to find better ways of disciplining children," Russell said. "We want to promote other means of working problems out."

Cheers came in multiple languages as supporters sang, "Hey, ho, Child Abuse has got to go," and "Diga le no al abuso de los ninos."

Middle school students Keith Ortega, Danny Ynfante and Bryan Serrano also made signs with messages such as "Hitting Should Stop Now."

Doxene Roberts, Director of Family Support Services at WHEDCo, spoke with empathy about the difficult lives abused children continue to live without role models to look up to.

"Coming from an abusive family, some people don't know any different," Roberts said. "They get frustrated."

Sharing the harsh reality of community abuse cases, WHEDCo counselor Anthony Davis said, "You wouldn't think that it's happening, but it's happening."

Adrian Joseph, 14, described



Photo by Adam Bermudez

Highbridge youth let their message be heard with chants and colorful posters promoting child abuse awareness.

his opinion of child abuse in one word – bad.

With a precocious and thoughtful worldview at such a young age, Joseph spoke of how such abuses affect youth his age.

"I think that kids who get abused now might become killers someday," he said.

Youth worker Amy Bonnaffons addressed WHEDCo's sponsored

youth program. "Project STEP gets students involved with service learning to combine academics and involvement in the community," she explained.

Tyjahwon Jenkins, 13, believes the event sent a good message. "It's good for the community," she said. "It's nice to see some kids who really care."