

# Canarsie Courier

Top Stories

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## HES Seniors Get Chance To Take "Broadway" Stage

By Dara Mormile



Seniors get direction for a scene from "A Chorus Line." Charles Rogers

Seniors get into character Thursday mornings at the Hebrew Educational Society when the Jewish Association for Services for the Aging (JASA) directs the "Magic of Broadway." This exciting, new program is sponsored by the non-profit organization Inside Broadway, which brings the experience of musical theatre to communities across the city. The 20-week pilot program is a city initiative, funded by the City Council, the Department for the Aging and the Department of Cultural Affairs.

"Seniors will love this program because Broadway was a major part of their culture as they grew up," said Michael Presser, founder and executive producer of Inside Broadway. "And I think seniors want to do more than play Bingo and eat lunch. We offer them an outlet to enhance their intellect and we know they're going to be 100 percent tuned in to what's going on."

While Inside Broadway is Manhattan-based and works primarily with children in after school programs, a special grant has enabled the city's new Seniors Meet the Arts program to make the course available in 17 senior centers throughout Brooklyn, Manhattan, The Bronx and Queens.

Thirty seniors take part in the one-hour workshops, which are led at the HES by Shannon Marshall, an instructor who has been with Inside Broadway for two years.

"I began teaching them the basics of Broadway, then we moved to dancing, singing and acting," she said. "At the end of the program, in June, they'll put on a big show. A couple of weeks ago they recreated scenes from 'A Chorus Line.' There has been a really great turnout the past few weeks and they're wonderful to work with."

If the program is successful at the end of the four months, Presser says the City Council will most likely continue its funding.

"There are two great things about this program," he said. "Many seniors will remember classic shows like 'West Side Story' and 'Camelot,' and they remember the original casts. In turn, there's a greater appreciation for the material they learn. Second, we're proud to be able to expand our programming to audiences from ages 8 through 80. The arts are a wonderful partner for seniors who want to stay active."

Presser said programs offered to students differ in the types of shows performed by seniors. Youths are introduced to more contemporary plays, such as "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown," and "Smokey Joe's Café."

"A lot of companies just offer tickets to seniors at discounted prices to go see a show," said manager Nick Sala. "But we bring Broadway to them and we want them to be part of the show."