

GROUP CAN NOW SERVE COMMUNITY FOR 2ND YR.



Church's law program to get 5G in legal aid

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A GRASS-ROOTS effort that helps Queens Village residents who need affordable legal assistance has gotten a big boost from \$5,000 secured by a local councilman.

The program, run from Redeemer Lutheran Church on 217th St. and 92nd Ave., can now serve the community with legal help for a second year.

Last year was a "huge success," said Fred Rooney, program director of the Community Legal Resource Network at CUNY Law School in Flushing, which set up the program.

"With a very small [\$3,000] grant, we were able to serve over 120 people," he said. "It is a very cost-effective way for people to meet with lawyers.

"While we can't provide actual representation, we found that a lot of the issues they bring to the consultation are issues that can be resolved without litigation or court representation."

City Councilman David Weprin, who secured funding for this year and last, said: "My district and Queens in general is very diverse. We have a lot of

new immigrants from many different countries who speak many different languages."

Weprin said the number of calls to his district office showed that many were in need of legal advice about all sorts of matters, including immigration and housing.

He said he contacted CUNY Law in Flushing, and "they were very happy to start up this immigration assistance program and referral service."

The Queens City Council delegation, headed by Councilman Leroy Comrie (D-St. Albans) also is providing \$50,000 in funding to the Community Legal Resource Network, which is staffed by some 260 lawyers — all graduates of CUNY Law.

"The largest percentage of CLRN members either live or work in Queens, or both,"

Rooney said. "CLRN members are very much like the Borough of Queens in that they reflect a rich blend of racial, cultural and ethnic diversity."

Among the languages they speak, he said, are Korean, Haitian Creole, French, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew and Dutch.

There are plans to start up three more neighborhood legal clinics, including two in Flushing and a third in the Washington Heights/Inwood area of Manhattan.

Assemblyman Jimmy Meng (D-Flushing) and Councilman John Liu (D-Flushing) have provided the funding to expand the program into their districts, while Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat (D-Inwood) is providing the funding for the northern Manhattan legal clinic.

Community Legal Resource Network lawyers "are very much like the Borough of Queens ... they reflect a rich blend of racial, cultural and ethnic diversity."

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