

Teens attend city youth conference

■ Some 15 Islanders are among the 400 youths who participate in a variety of workshops

ADVANCE STAFF REPORT

Muhammed Cannon, 16, of Clifton, attended a youth conference in Manhattan yesterday that drew more than 400 teens because he wanted to network with other citywide youth groups and get different points of view.

The teen-ager, a senior who attends Murry Bergtraum High School in Manhattan, wants to be an institutional stockbroker.

"That's someone who works for himself and does not have to pay anyone else commission," explained Cannon, who is president

of the youth board of Community Change for Youth Development (CCYD), a program to involve the community in developing activities and offering guidance to at-risk youth in Stapleton and Clifton.

His friend, Muhammed Wurie, 17, of Port Richmond, who just graduated from the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan and is vice president of CCYD, is pursuing a graphic arts degree at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan.

Speaking of Cannon, Wurie said, "He will be rich so he can pay for my canvasses when I am an artist."

This positive outlook for success was the message of the all-day conference for hundreds of teens held at the Manhattan Community College in lower Manhattan.

Sponsored by the city Department of Youth and Community Development, the teens attended workshops that ranged from con-

flict resolution, to computers in the classroom, to managing money. About 15 Staten Islanders attended.

Jerry Cammarata, Staten Island's representative to the Board of Education, and chairman of the Department of Youth and Community Development's youth board, chaired the event.

In addition to the workshops, Felipe Luciano, an on-air reporter for Fox Channel 5 news, gave a rousing keynote speech about his journey from being in jail for being involved in a killing to becoming a journalist.

He told the assembled not to let negative people, like drug dealers or even parents, destroy their vision of what they want to be. The Puerto Rican-American told the teens, who were mostly people of color, that they should keep an open mind about all people and not let prejudice guide them. He also emphasized the importance of reading.

Advance reporter Robin Eisner co-chaired a workshop with B.D. LaRock of NY1 news about media and violence, which addressed the issues of the representation of people of color in the news, particularly when killings occur.

Many of the teens said the media was biased against people of color because the predominantly white newscasters and the staffs of news shows and newspapers do not understand their community.

One participant in the workshop, Joshua Satten, 15, of Mariners Harbor, who attends Curtis High School, said non-white people should have presided over the workshop.

"They should have gotten people who were more representative of the crowd," Satten said. Ms. Eisner and LaRock are white.

But Satten, who is secretary of the CCYD and wants to be a lawyer, said he was happy the two reporters had real experience.

"At least they didn't send us interns," he said.

Also attending the conference was Idris Ojelade, 16, of St. George, the son of Julie Moody Lewis, executive director of the Sandy Ground Historical Society.

"It's good to have things like this, to show them the right way," said Ojelade, a student at the High School for Economics and Finance in Manhattan. "We hear positive stuff a lot but we slip. This gets them back on track."