

COMMUNITY

YMCA launches satellite location on Ashley Street

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN LYNDS

The sky's the limit for the East Boston YMCA's new facility on Ashley Street across from St. Joseph-St. Lazarus Church.

The Y recently put \$50,000 of improvements in the old church hall which included updates to the gym, bathrooms, the hall's fire system, new doors and windows and a much needed paint job.

Executive Director Joey Cuzzi said the began renovations in the spring in order to get the site up and running in time for the Y's summer camp.

"This really is a great addition to the East Boston YMCA and we look at this new facility as an extension of Bremen Street," said Cuzzi.

The Y signed a three year lease with the Boston Archdiocese for the building with another three year option after the original lease runs out.

The building, which had been vacant of community activity for a number of years with exception of the Orient Heights Neighborhood Association, has been turned into a vibrant community center and offering a variety of health and wellness programs for adults, families and children.

The building opened on June 28 as home base for the Y's camp, and will be programmed this summer in the evenings and weekends for children, adults and families.

"We are planning everything from dance classes to aerobics to family days," said Cuzzi. "We can really grow in this space so it's very exciting."

Members of the East Boston Y, have member privileges at the Ashley Street location.

"This means you can use the gym and its regulation size basketball court during open gym times, and will be entitled to member pricing for programs that require a registration fee," explained Cuzzi.

The two story building includes a lower level hall which is handicapped accessible, and a 4,000 square foot gym on the main level.

"The building will be staffed by the Y and held to the same standards of operation as Bremen Street, with all instruction provided by trained and certified YMCA employees," said Cuzzi. "Your current membership card will allow you access to Ashley Street."



East Boston YMCA campers and staff outside their new location on Ashley Street.



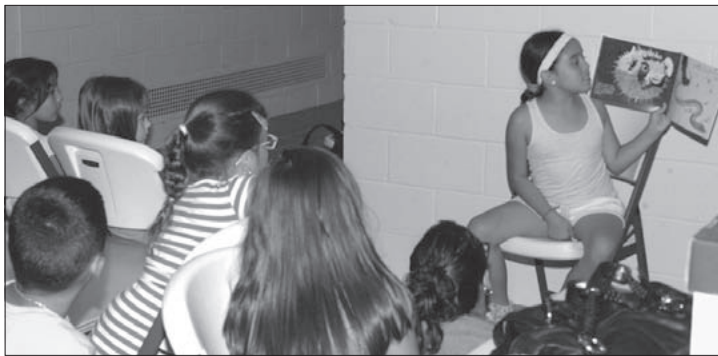
East Boston YMCA summer campers play freeze dance at the Y's new facility at 54 Ashley St.



A Y camp counselor begins a science class with animal shells.



One camper gets to see what an armadillo shell feels like.



During story-time, campers take turns reading their favorite books to one another.



The Y's program director Russell Lamberti shows kids a skunk skin.



Camper with a bull horn.



Campers think the skunk fur still stinks!