

### SOUTH BRONX GETS FIRST PUBLIC WI-FI HOTSPOT *By Linda Armstrong*

Residents and non-profit organizations in the area of the South Bronx referred to as the Hub—which includes eight large streets that converge at 149th—including 3rd, Willis and Melrose Avenues and 149th Street itself—are equipped with the first Wi-Fi Hotspot in the area. “We decided to put the antenna at that apex, which is where SoBRO is located—555 Bergen Avenue—which is half a block from our Network Operations Center,” said Doug Frazier, co-chairman of Urban Communications Transport and president of Home Networking Services (HNS). HNS is a group that is comprised of Urban and SoBRO. Urban is the largest minority owned franchise in the country and it acquired and installed the necessary technology to make the Hub a cellular Wi-Fi Hotspot.

Urban serves 3 million homes in the city and has had the franchise for 12 years. “We’ve connected with SoBRO through a grant from the Office of Community Service, which is under the Dept. of Health and together we are HNS,” Frazier explained.

The residents and the non-profit have the internet access free of charge. HNS is underwriting the costs. Why do this? According to Frazier the answer is

obvious. “It’s very simple, we live in an information age and we hear all these initiatives about bringing services in other places. But we ask kids that live in the South Bronx to go to the library or go to their school and stand on line to get on-line and that’s a shame. You are asking these children to compete with children who have these devices in their homes. So we decided that instead of talking about it, we’d be about it. We’re an internet service provider in the community and we decided to make the service available to the community,” Frazier said.

Thursday, May 25 was the official launching of the Wi-Fi Hotspot and some of the people who attended the ceremony included Councilwoman Gale Brewer, the chairperson of the City Council’s Committee on Technology, Councilwoman Arroyo, Deputy Borough President Earl Brown, Serrafin Mario, President of New York National Bank and Mario Boddin, SoBRO’s Vice President of Economic Development.

Recalling how HNS came to acquire the antenna and get things up and running, Frazier recalled, “We had an antenna donated to us by IDT in Newark, NJ, but this type is more of a



cellular Wi-Fi antenna. I figured out how to get it working. The antenna has 11 antennas within the antenna. It’s a complicated device. We got the youths and some of our skilled people who had been with us for a long time and put it in and got it transmitting. It took about two weeks to install everything and then another week to get it orientated and

transmitting. We brought fiber optic cable into the buildings. The Wi-Fi signal has enough capacity to handle 24,000 simultaneously telephone calls. Once families and non-profits were connected we told them where to go to get a free email connection.”