BRINGING BRONX TO CENSUS

Group urges residents to reply for share of fed cash

BY SONDRA WOLFER

WHILE Bronxites showed greater mail response to the 2010 Census than they did to the Census 10 years ago, parts of the borough still lag behind.

Now a local organization originally funded to help residents respond by mail to Census questionnaires is shifting gears to make sure those who failed to send back the questionnaires open their doors to Census Bureau enumerators.

While the Bronx mailbox response rate increased from 57% in 2000 to 62% this year, several communities had a response rate near or below 50%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Some neighborhoods in the north central Bronx had the lowest mailbox response rates in the borough, notably Edenwald (51.7%), Woodlawn (49.7%) and Williamsbridge (49.6%).

"It is important that residents of these and other Bronx neighborhoods open their doors if the borough is to receive its fair share of federal resources over the next 10 years," said Ken Small, development director of the nonprofit BronxWorks, formerly known as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

"Opening your door to answer 10 questions could be the difference between the Bronx gaining or losing $100 million a year over the next 10 years," said Small. "A billion dollars can go a long way throughout our borough, especially in high need areas."

Bronxworks has received two grants to provide census outreach, one from the New York Community Trust, the other from the New York State Department of State.

"Basically, it has meant doing just about everything — street outreach, neighborhood events to educate people about the Census," said Bronxworks program developer Tim Sarraille. "We haven't gone door-to-door. That's the Census Bureau's job."

Enumerators, who have already begun knocking on doors in many neighborhoods, will continue the door-to-door campaign through July.

The enumerators have official government-issued identification cards and only one task — to count the members of every household that did not submit a census form by mail.

All census takers have taken an oath of confidentiality and will not share personal data with any other government agency or organization, including law enforcement, immigration, or homeland security.