

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Youth to Protest the Upcoming Closure of the Arthur Capper Recreation Center

The youth of Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg, working with Friends and Residents of Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg, will protest the upcoming closure of the Capper Recreation Center on **Wednesday February 26 at 5:30 PM at 1000 5th Street SE in Washington, DC** (outside the recreation center).

District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) has plans to close the Capper Recreation Center, located in the public housing community of Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg in SE Washington, on Friday February 28 as part of the Hope VI redevelopment plans for the community. According to the youth and other residents of the community, the closure is an unnecessary and arbitrary decision made by Paul Rowe, Hope VI Project Director, Neil Albert, District of Columbia Recreation Director, and Michael Kelley, DCHA Director. Youth and other residents point out that the buildings near the recreation center aren't scheduled for demolition until the end of 2003, meaning there is no need for closure this early in the process. The original Hope VI grant, and recent promises by the DCHA Commission, has stated that the redevelopment community is entitled to un-interrupted services until the last person moves out, which will be in 2005. With no need for closure now, and with promises already made to keep services available, the youth and other residents will demand to know why the recreation center is planned to close a few days after Wednesday's protest.

There has been no official notification of the planned closure made to residents. Friends and Residents, serving as a watchdog over the Hope VI process, discovered the plans and had to alert residents on its own.

Over 200 youth in the community and surrounding areas depend on the services provided by the recreation center, including providing a safe haven and positive activities for the youth of Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg.

Friends and Residents is a resident-led organization formed to provide meaningful resident input in the Hope VI process at Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg. Friends and Residents represents is voices of residents concerned about being permanently kicked out of their community.

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Latia Dixon, a resident of Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg, recently wrote the following letter and then helped gather over 250 signatures in protest of the planned closure of the Recreation Center.

Dear Community:

I am a 13-year-old girl who lives in the neighborhood and loves to go to the Recreation Center where I feel safe and protected. I've heard things about people having to move in months, or years so this neighborhood can be rebuilt.

Now I hear that the Rec. is supposed to be closing down on February 28, 2003 which means we children don't have long to enjoy our last moments at the Rec. I figure if we are not moving for a while why do we have to close our Recreation Center down? Think about it: if we as a community don't stop our Rec. from closing where will your child be? Hanging on corners, selling drugs, or other things related to that. Mrs. Campbell, Oscar, and Ms. Chew are people I look up to. There are many activities and opportunities offered at the Rec.

I ask if you would like to help would you sign your name at the bottom.

*Thank you,
Latia Dixon*