



Young performers dazzle the audience yesterday during the All Stars Talent Show at John Adams High School in Ozone Park. The event, sponsored by All Stars Project Inc., was held in honor of Sean Bell, a graduate of John Adams. NEWSDAY PHOTOS / ALEJANDRA VILLA

An All Stars tribute to a life

A community youth group holds a talent showcase to honor Sean Bell and speak out against violence

BY T.W. FARNAM
SPECIAL TO NEWSDAY

Cheers thundered through the packed auditorium at Sean Bell's high school alma mater in Ozone Park yesterday, with 200 young performers singing and dancing in a show dedicated to the man who was fatally shot by police two weeks ago in nearby Jamaica.

"It's an alternative," said Jermin Pieters, 23, an assistant producer of the All Stars Talent Show, sponsored by the community nonprofit group All Stars Project Inc. "People out there are marching, and this is like our march right here, for youth and for development."

Master of ceremonies Wil Farris, 24, an investment banker from Crown Heights

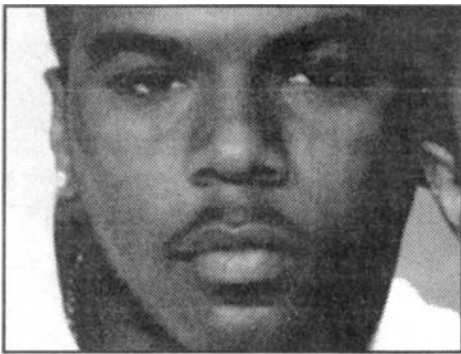
who uses the moniker "Big Wil," addressed the crowd of 1,000 as dozens of young dancers stood behind him in colorful sparkling skirts and billowing tops.

"All Stars has worked as a positive anti-violence program from its earliest days," Farris said. "In honoring Sean, All Stars rededicates itself to work with all people throughout the city, to end

violence and to start up development."

Bell, 23, of Far Rockaway, a star baseball pitcher during his years at the school, was to marry high school sweetheart Nicole Paultre, 22, on Nov. 25, the day he was shot. The minister who was to marry them said Bell gave up the prospect of a baseball career to stay with Paultre and their two young daughters.

"This your first time at an All Stars Talent Show?" asked Pat Harry, 55, of South Ozone Park, a judge in the contest whose three children graduated from John Adams and who now runs a dance studio in the neighborhood. "Look over there. You see how little they are, the young ones. They are going to blow your mind! That's talent right there."



Sean Bell was a star baseball pitcher for John Adams.



Devon Pearsallevans, 11, was among 200 performers, ages 5 to 25, at the All Stars Talent Show.

The performers - singers, dancers, rappers and steppers ages 5 to 25 - certainly impressed the crowd, which would not acquiesce to requests for them to remain seated.

Vanessa Hernandez, 16, of Queensbridge and Long Island City High School, performed with about two dozen other members of the Split Personality group. The girls at one point leaned far back with their feet apart while each pointing one arm at the crowd.

"It felt good. A lot of people were cheering for us," she said, having just caught her breath after the performance.

The All Stars program, founded in 1981, works with

thousands of students in New York City and Newark, bringing performance programs into their classes and students into law firms, banks and other high-profile jobs throughout the city through internships and career-development classes.

"That's how you combat violence. You build some kind of positive alternative," said Gabrielle L. Kurlander, president of the All Stars Project. "The young people make this environment possible. They say, 'Our communities are going to be positive and our communities are going to grow,' and that's the statement they make when they perform."