

PAL kids ridin' high at Coney

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Three thousand PAL kids from the four corners of the five boroughs converged on Coney Island yesterday to find out what it would be like to own an amusement park.

Well, maybe not quite own, but Astroland Park rides were free for the day for youngsters from Police Athletic League day camps, and that was almost as good as having the deed to the place.

The biggest problem was choosing between the Cyclone and the Tilt-A-Whirl.

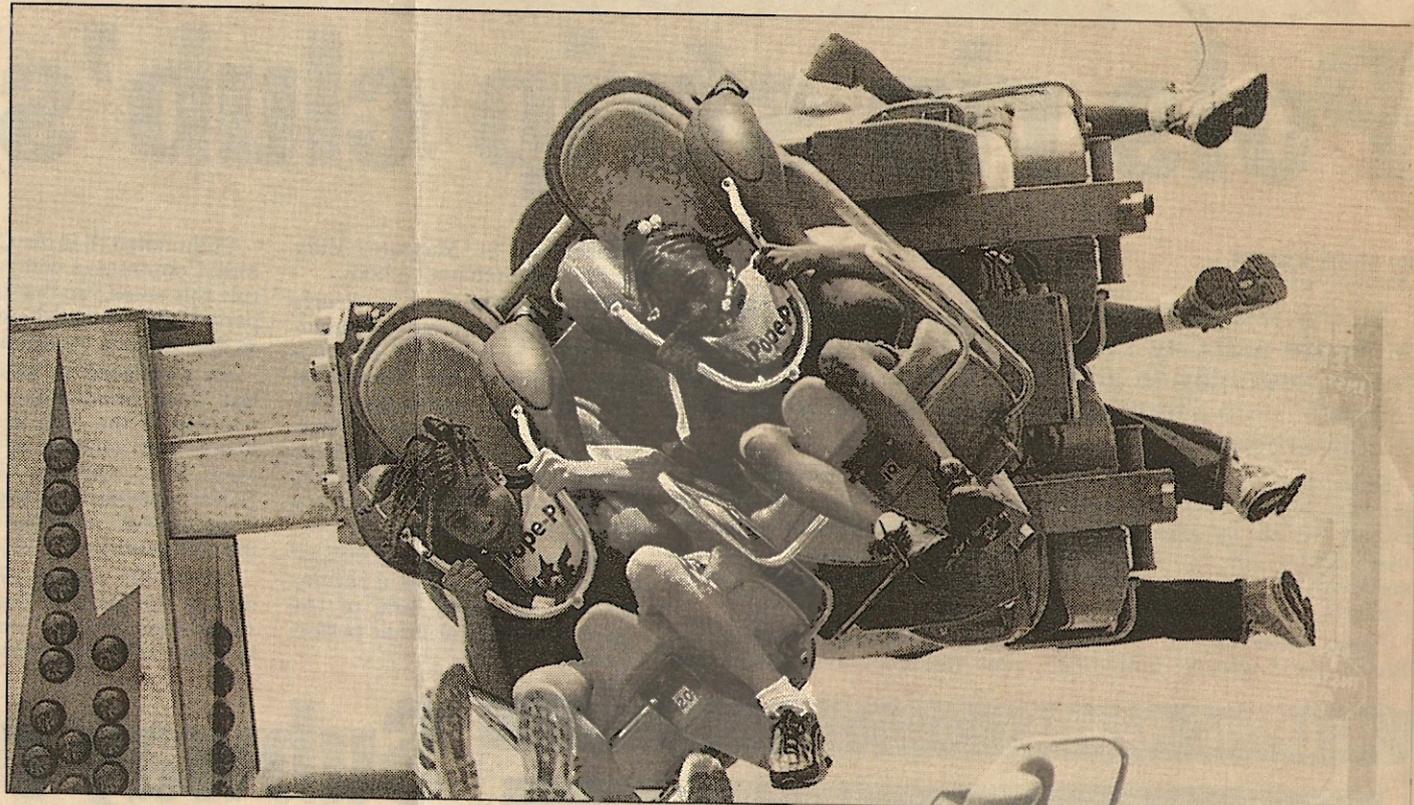
"They're having a ball," said Ursula Cooper-Hunter, assistant director for full-time PAL centers. "They get to ride all day, eat lunch and even choose dessert. They're having a fabulous time."

PAL sponsors summer day camp from July 9 to Aug. 31 for New York City children ages 6 through 13, Cooper-Hunter said. There are 11 branches of the camp, located in all five boroughs, all of which attended yesterday's first-ever event. Astroland operators even decided to shut the park down to the public for the campers.

"Normally, we would do this on a day when the park was closed, but we couldn't get it scheduled, so we closed it," said Steve Urbanowicz, Astroland's public relations manager. "We approached PAL, and we've been trying to plan something like this all winter. [The kids] look like they're having a blast, which is exactly what our goal is."

Two clowns, Hugs and Paddy, were on hand to supply the kids with stickers.

"We've been going on rides with them," Hugs said. "We're having fun, too."



UP, UP & AWAY Kids from Police Athletic League day camp get tossed around as they enjoy Power Surge ride at Coney Island's Astroland Park yesterday. RON ANTONELLI

For Anthony Callistro, 8, from the Harlem PAL Center, the heat made his favorite ride better. "I like the water ride and when it goes down the slide," he said. "It keeps me cool."

Having a great time with Anthony was

his counselor, Eileen Perez. The counselors split the kids up into smaller groups to better enjoy the day, Perez said.

Adrianna Ryan, 10, of East New York, said she already wants to come again next year. Adrianna attends the PAL

camp based at the Schwartz Center in East New York.

Her favorite ride?

"So far the Cyclone," she said. "And I won a stuffed animal and five bracelets. It's fun."