

fall 2007 newsletter

success stories



Photo: Laura Dwight

Staying Safe and Engaged While School is Out

Summer Fun in the City

In summer 2007, Good Shepherd was able to keep over 1,000 children in Brooklyn and the Bronx safe, cool, and entertained through six different day camp programs. Each camp was located at a school where Good Shepherd provides after-school services during the academic year, allowing the children and their families the security of year-round care in a familiar environment. “It was a very exciting summer,” said Rebecca, a first-time teenage counselor at our Red Hook Beacon summer camp, “the children were really enthusiastic, and there was something for everyone. No one ever got left out.”

Like many of the youth who work at Good Shepherd camps through the city’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and even many of the full-time adult staff, Rebecca attended the same camp in her younger days. “I was one of the first Beacon kids,” says Roland, the Red Hook Beacon Activities Specialist. “This was a safe haven for me. I knew I could always talk to the counselors about everything. I know what the campers here are going through because I’ve been there.”

The camps, which ran from 8am to 6pm on weekdays in July and August, combine traditional day camp activities such as swimming lessons, arts and crafts, dance, sports and music, with the strength-based youth development model that permeates all of our work with young people. Teamwork, friendship, respect for each other, and participation for all are heavily emphasized. Andrew, an 11 year-old who has attended the Bronx Beacon camps for the past six years, says he’s become friends with children who attend his school that he never knew until camp. The camp Olympics at the Red Hook Beacon is focused on teambuilding, rather than points – “Our Olympics is about sportsmanship, not just winning,” says Christine, a Lehman College student who

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

At Good Shepherd, we are committed to the growth, development and empowerment of our program participants and staff. A guiding maxim for our leadership development is that we must bring out the best in ourselves and others. It is our belief in the innate strengths of vulnerable young people that turns youth, who have essentially dropped out, into high school graduates ... that inspires adolescents from high-need Bronx and Brooklyn neighborhoods to become caring and committed youth workers in our summer camp and after-school programs... that motivates our young people to aim higher with their post-secondary plans.

We set high expectations for our program participants and challenge ourselves to be the best we can be at both the program and operating levels. This results in high quality and effective programs that are attracting ever-increasing levels of recognition. We are proud that the approach that we have used at South Brooklyn Community High School, our pioneering transfer high school, is now recognized as a national model because of its success. It is also an incredible honor to have been selected as the inaugural winner of the prestigious New York Times Company Nonprofit Excellence Award for overall management excellence.

These accomplishments and others described in the pages of this newsletter demonstrate the power of our strengths-based philosophy of service and the core values upon which our work is based. As we continue to grow and help more vulnerable young people access a more promising future, the commitment of our friends and supporters remains critical to our success. Thank you for helping us effect real change in our city’s high-need communities by building quality programs that work.

In gratitude,

Shuette Lo Monaco

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New School in the Bronx

More than a hundred young people who have been truant or dropped out of high school are embarking on a fresh start this September as the very first students of Bronx Community High School (BCHS). This new transfer school is the second replication of our highly acclaimed South Brooklyn Community High School (SBCHS), and follows the opening of West Brooklyn Community High School in September of 2006.

A key aspect of our transfer school model is the strong partnership between Good Shepherd and the NYC Department of Education (DOE), which allows both organizations to concentrate on their areas of expertise, while working together to approach the needs of our students holistically. Good Shepherd provides the counseling staff and supportive services that allow the young people to stay focused on their goals, and the DOE teachers provide a rigorous academic program, under the joint leadership of a DOE Principal and a Good Shepherd Program Director.

“I think the model is very effective and I can see that it works for young people. It creates an environment where teachers can focus on academics and on each student individually,” says BCHS Principal Matt Roberts, who previously spent four years as a global studies teacher at SBCHS. Matt had already decided to apply



Photo: Laura Dwight

to NYC’s Leadership Academy to become a school principal when plans for the formation of BCHS were announced. He was able to have his Academy field placement at SBCHS as well, shadowing and learning from SBCHS principal Vanda Belusic-Vollor. “At SBCHS we were truly a team,” he recalls. “The fact that there are two different employers was secondary to working

as a team with a common mission. We want to replicate this at BCHS.”

Program Director Naida Pastrana, Matt’s Good Shepherd counterpart, is similarly enthusiastic about the partnership. “I’ve provided support services in schools before,” she says, “but this is different. At BCHS everybody – Matt, the teachers, everyone – is fully with us.

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AWARD

GSS Takes Top Management Award

In June, Good Shepherd Services was awarded the top New York Times Company Non-profit Excellence Award for overall management excellence. Good Shepherd was selected from over 144 qualified applicants first to be one of ten semi-finalists, and then one of four finalists, through an extensive three-step process involv-

ing two stages of written applications and a culminating site visit. The awards, which were given for the first time this year, were a collaborative effort by the New York Times Community Affairs Department, the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, and the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers.

Executive Director Sr. Paulette LoMonaco and Board of Directors President Robert Niehaus presented a question-and-answer format workshop at the ceremony where the awards were announced, going into detail about the practices that particularly impressed the Selection Committee. These included the strength of our mission-driven culture, which has remained consistent as we have successfully completed two mergers and grown from a budget of \$15M to \$50M over the past 15 years, our exemplary

financial management practices, our strong commitment to supervision and leadership development and our efforts to create multiple feedback systems to ensure that we all stay focused on our mission and values. Good Shepherd and the three other finalists were also profiled in a New York Times supplement published the same day as the award ceremony.

“We are tremendously honored to receive this award, which reflects the contribution of our Board, dedicated staff and committed supporters,” said Sr. Paulette. “Together we have built an agency that is leading the way in the pursuit of excellence and innovative management and program practices. This recognition reflects our success at bringing out the best in ourselves and our program participants.”



Selection Committee Chair, Darren Walker and Sr. Paulette

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

New Possibilities for One of Our Graduates

“Graduating was something that I felt I needed to do for myself and my family,” says Jeffany, a young woman who earned her GED in June through Good Shepherd’s ACCESS GED program, and the first person in her immediate family to complete high school.

ACCESS GED, a full-time program specifically tailored to the older adolescent age group, which opened last September, is one of Good Shepherd’s many partnerships with the NYC Department of Education’s (DOE) Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation. With less than 60% of New York City high school students graduating within four years, the city realized the need to expand the educational options for overage, under-credited youth. Good Shepherd has emerged as a leader in developing specialized programs to put these youth back on track to graduation and beyond.

Jeffany is one of 826 young people to complete their high school education through a Good Shepherd Multiple Pathways program last year. Other programs include our two transfer schools for youth who are truanting or have dropped out, South Brooklyn Community High School, and West Brooklyn Community High School; and eight Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs), which offer evening high school classes to youth over 17 and allow them to receive diplomas from their original high schools.

All of our Multiple Pathways programs provide students with specialized support services rooted in our signature strength-based

youth development model. These services can often make the difference for youth who struggle with many challenges. “At my original high school,” recalls Jeffany, “the teachers and staff weren’t in a position to understand me or my situation. It just wasn’t an environment I could be comfortable in.” At ACCESS, “I felt like the teachers and staff had more time to work with us. They talked to us, listened to us, and got to know us as people.” Jeffany was also able to arrange her school schedule to accommodate the demands of her life. “When I found out it was full-time, I was afraid I wasn’t going to be able to do it, because I need to have a job as well. But the principal said they could work with me on that, and they did.”



Jeffany, a recent ACCESS GED Program graduate

Another common element in our various Multiple Pathways programs is the DOE’s Learning-to-Work (LTW) initiative, which provides workshops on job and career issues, as well as subsidized internships. Jeffany found the workshops “very eye-opening – we did a lot of exercises that helped us understand who we are, why we do and say certain things and how they affect other people. That’s very important in a work environment, but it was also very helpful just to learn more about yourself and your peers.” She also feels her internship has opened many doors for her by providing her with office experience that she can use toward building a career, as opposed to the retail work she had previously done.

After interning as an Administrative Assistant, Jeffany is pursuing full-time employment and acquiring Microsoft Office certification. She has been accepted at LaGuardia Community College for the fall semester, but is considering going to business school first. While she considers her expanded options, Jeffany also feels a sense of personal satisfaction and is proud that she can now set a better example for her younger brother. “After years of trying and trying and not getting anywhere, it was a great achievement to graduate.”

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Summer Camps



Photo: Laura Dwight

has been working at the camp for the past three years. Eddie, the Bronx Beacon Gym Instructor, who is also a former camper, developed a system where the children earn free time in

the gym by working together and encouraging each other during group games. Tashana, who attended the Bronx Beacon camp for seven years before becoming a counselor this past year recalls, “I learned how to cooperate, how to work in a team, how to talk and communicate with other people. I kind of found myself here. That’s why I wanted to work here, to give back what I got out of it.”

Several camps incorporated themes into the overall design of the summer program. Every Friday campers at PS 32 broke from their regular age-defined groups into ‘elemental’ groups – fire, air, earth, and water – to participate in various environmental educational activities based on their chosen element. The camp at PS 27, which, like PS 32 and the Brooklyn Beacon, is also located in Red Hook, had a dinosaur theme this year, which kicked off with a ‘Dino Egg Hunt’ during staff training, and continued throughout the summer with the

creation of dinosaur crafts by the campers.

The camps made use of New York’s rich resources with frequent trips to places like the Bronx Zoo, Central Park, the New York Aquarium, Coney Island’s Astroland Park, the Museum of Natural History, the Children’s Museum, and Sony Wonderlab. Giving the children a taste of the world outside the city limits was also on the agenda. The PS 79 camp, located in the University Heights section of the Bronx, visited a different state park every week.

All in all, it was a highly successful summer for the Good Shepherd camps, thanks to the safe, fun and friendly environment created by the dedicated staff and youth workers and the impressive array of activities they coordinated for the campers. “Our activities help the kids develop,” says Lauren, who works at the Bronx Beacon. “Some kids start out shy, but at the end of the summer, they have friends, and they go home happy.”

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New School in the Bronx

It's a really unique partnership. With this model we are able to be more attentive to the students and serve them better."

As with all our transfer schools, students must apply to become part of the BCHS community and participate in an intake process which also involves their parents. "These students are highly motivated," says Naida. "They want to come back to school, but the traditional school structure just didn't work for them."

This is certainly true for Peter, who is turning 18 and has 16 of the 44 high school credits needed for graduation. He is happy that his fellow students share his resolve. "At my last school, I was a follower and kept cutting class," he says. "Now I am in a small school with the right kind of people—we're all in the same position. I am going to make it my business to make sure I finish high school. I would like to make my mother proud of me."

The incoming students participated in a series of group workshops during the month of August, getting to know each other as well as the Advocate Counselors who are assigned to work individually with each student at the school. The staff is as enthusiastic about the opening of BCHS as the school leadership is, and they all agree that getting to know the students through the intake and orientation process has been an incredibly powerful experience. "The young people really want to make a new start," says Advocate Counselor Kevin Towns, "and many of them say it's the first time anyone has really believed in them."

With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, GSS is also helping three other community-based organizations open transfer high schools based on the GSS model. The first of these third-party replications, North Queens Community High School, operated by SCO Family of Services, also opens this September.

New Board Member

We are pleased to welcome Alan H. Fishman, a longstanding supporter of GSS, to the Board of Directors. Mr. Fishman, who has devoted his entire business career to the financial services industry, currently serves as Chairman of Meridian Capital Group. Prior to joining Meridian, Mr. Fishman served as President of Sovereign Bank and President and Chief Executive Officer of Independence Community Bank.



Photo: Laura Dwight

ANNUAL FUND

Good Shepherd stands at an especially exciting moment in our history as we launch the second year of implementation of our three-year business plan. We are working to strengthen and deepen our services so that more young people can be helped in making a safe passage to self-sufficiency. By joining with us, you can help us realize our vision for the future – a future that includes broadened services in New York City neighborhoods in need, increased excellence in the provision of those services, and a greater impact in New York and beyond, as we serve as a model for other agencies helping vulnerable youth and families. Please consider helping us reach our Annual Fund goal by sending in your contribution today. Alternatively, you may donate online at: www.goodshepherds.org.

YOUR GIFT AT WORK

Matching Gifts

Many companies have a matching gift program. You can maximize your contribution to us by completing the appropriate matching gift form. Please log on to www.goodshepherds.org to see if your company matches gifts.

Workplace Giving

Direct your United Way contribution to Good Shepherd Services by marking **001138** on your pledge card. You will also find us listed in the campaign brochures of the State Employee Federated Appeal, the Combined Municipal Campaign, the Combined Federal Campaign and the CUNY Campaign for Voluntary Charitable Giving.

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