

spring 2007 newsletter

success stories



Photo: Laura Dwight

Saluting Our Volunteers

Enriching Our Work, Empowering Our Youth

Good Shepherd's approach to working with vulnerable youth and their families is consistent whether we are working in a school, a local community or within one of our residential programs. We surround them with as many services, supports and opportunities as we can, and we stay with them for long enough to make a difference in their lives. Our volunteers are a vital part of the seamless web of enrichment and support that we create to help our program participants achieve success.

This newsletter pays tribute to our volunteers. Every day, the lives of the children, youth and families we serve are touched by the contributions of individuals who have chosen to give back in a meaningful way. Some come to us as part of a corporate team and may devote a day painting or gardening in our group residences, helping to build the set of a play in one of our after-school programs, sharing their knowledge of the financial world with youth or collecting needed supplies for residents in our domestic violence shelter. Others, who may have reached out to us individually or through one of our corporate partnerships, share their time and talent on a more regular basis, mentoring or providing other needed services and enrichments.

The efforts of all our volunteers are valued and each one of them deserves special recognition. Within the limited space of this issue, we have chosen to highlight just a few of these extraordinary people. We want to acknowledge their specific roles and impact but also to convey some of the many dimensions of the volunteering opportunities at Good Shepherd and inspire others to help.

If you are interested in exploring either corporate or individual volunteering opportunities, please contact: Mary Beth Zurat at 212-243-7070, ext. 318 or via e-mail marybeth_zurat@good-shepherds.org.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

I am extremely proud to inform you that as we go to press, Good Shepherd is among the semi-finalists in the 2007 New York Times Company Nonprofit Excellence Awards. We are one of only ten organizations who have been selected to move on to the next phase of this awards program, a new project of The New York Times Community Affairs Department, the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York (NPCC) and the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers. The Awards recognize management excellence and encourage innovation and communication among New York's large and diverse nonprofit community. The initial application process was complex and highly competitive, and so it is a great achievement to have reached this level. Stay tuned for updates as the process moves forward!

We believe at Good Shepherd that one of the keys to the success of our work is our focus on strategic partnerships. We leverage a range of public and private resources and use our core competencies to add value to those of others. In schools, for example, we don't teach. But when we combine our expertise in youth development with the skills and knowledge of the teaching staff, we create the climate where education can take place. Similarly, we enrich our work by providing opportunities for volunteers to be involved with our youth and families in a variety of ways. These volunteers bring their own knowledge, experience and interests to the table, filling in gaps to ensure that we are able to provide the full range of supports and services needed for our young people to succeed over time.

As we receive increasing attention for our innovative programming, excellent practices, and management strengths, we are pleased to share the credit with the many individuals and groups who make it possible for us to attain our goals.

In gratitude,

Shuette Lo Monaco

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Volunteer Profiles

Finance, Foreign Food and Friendship at the Foyer

Sam and Phil, as Samuel Jacob and C. Phillip Tazza are routinely known around Good Shepherd, are an institution at the Chelsea Foyer at The Christopher.

Since the Foyer opened three years ago, our supported transitional housing program for young adults at high risk of homelessness has had the invaluable benefit of regular visits from this dedicated duo, who generously share their time, expertise and advice. Staff and residents alike agree that the pair have played a crucial role in making the Foyer a nurturing environment where our young people receive the support, services and information they need to blossom as independent adults. “Sam and Phil have hearts of gold, pure and kind,” says resident Patricia Yates, “they are a true blessing to this program.”

Both men put a great deal of thought and care into determining how they, specifically, can best help our youth. Longtime friends who are highly successful financial professionals, Sam and Phil share their interests and knowledge with our youth via monthly dinners and informal workshops, as well as hands-on assistance in preparing returns each tax season, consistently drawing a higher attendance than just about any other program activity. “The young people really gravitate to them,” says Program Director Brenda Tully, “They are very open

about their lives, and so willing to connect in whatever way is helpful.” Each dinner features a different ethnic food, helping to expose the residents to cuisines with which they may not be familiar. The workshop topics cover a wide range of professional and financial issues, such as entrepreneurship and investing, as well as issues of values and character. Resident Whitney John describes the workshops as “open minded conversations where we know that we can talk about anything.” The dedication and commitment expressed by Sam and Phil to our youth are nothing short of extraordinary. “They are busy people with full lives and demanding jobs,” says Brenda, “and yet they are unbelievably flexible in making time for our young people.”

Sam and Phil originally came to Good Shepherd some years ago, following an extensive discussion between the two to identify activities that would engender a sense of passion and fulfillment. They were – and continue to be – generous financial donors to charities, but they were also feeling the limits of the satisfaction that can be derived from writing checks. After determining that they really wanted to help young people who hadn’t had the same opportunities to reach



Phil Tazza and Sam Jacob at the Foyer

their full potential as they had growing up, Sam reached out to Robert O’Brien, a friend and former colleague who sits on our Board of Directors. We’ve been fortunate enough to have Sam and Phil on our team ever since.

They both stress that they feel they benefit as much as the young people. “I think of the Foyer as one of the things I do that makes me feel like I am doing something meaningful to help others and that I am about more than just a list of academic or business achievements,” says Sam. “The real positives for me are the ‘breakthroughs’ – when someone, who is hard to get through to, realizes that we are just two guys who gain no benefit other than the satisfaction of helping him or her. When this happens, the young people are so appreciative and feel

continued on back

Mutual Benefits of Mentoring



Susan Ferrucci and her mentee

Susan Ferrucci has been volunteering in various capacities for a long time, although law school did force her to slow it down. Fortunately, for her and for Good Shepherd, after passing the bar, Susan chose to join the Bronx DA’s office, which offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for its employees, including the Project Jump Mentoring Program. Project Jump has been matching volunteers from the DA’s of-

fice with students from the Bronx High School of Law and Community Services since 1992. Susan signed up with Project Jump, and has been with her mentee, Erica, for the past three years. “I really love that my job offers us the opportunity to give back to the community where we work,” she says, adding that while she still does other volunteer work, “this is the program I’m the happiest to be involved in.”

Susan and Erica have become very close, keeping in touch over the summers, although this is not a required part of the program. “I’m aware of what goes on in her life, I know her mother,” says Susan, “We talk about realistic goals, and a lot of life issues. I try to be as open as I can about my experiences.” Erica regularly visits Susan at the DA’s office, getting first-hand exposure to the working world, and they also meet frequently for movies, hot chocolate, homework help, or just to talk. “Erica’s taught me a lot of things,” continues Susan, “and she makes me laugh.” It’s not all fun and games, but

Susan feels their occasional clashes over issues such as Erica’s schoolwork have brought them closer. “We wouldn’t have kept up with the program if we didn’t both love it. Erica is wonderful, and I hope we’ll be in touch for as long as we are able to be.”

Susan also enjoys the monthly group activities organized by the GSS program coordinator. “I’ve gotten to know the other young people in the program and some people from my office that I probably wouldn’t have met in the course of my job. Everyone goes to the events even if their mentor or mentee can’t make it that month. It’s a great way to be involved with a group and an individual.”

“People associate the idea of volunteering with ‘giving up’ all of their free time,” she concludes, “but it’s really not a lot of time to have to put in to get so much back. This isn’t a chore; it’s a very rewarding way to spend your time.”

Strengthening Family Bonds

Dorcas Ariyibi didn't know a great deal about foster care, but she was intrigued when a couple she knew adopted a foster child. Dorcas, who has grown children of her own, thought that might be something she'd like to do someday. When she saw Good Shepherd's Foster Boarding Home (FBH) Program among the field placement options for the Community Health degree she was taking at Bronx Community College, it seemed like a good opportunity to learn more. A registered nurse and certified dietician, Dorcas had a significant background in community work and direct care, experience that served her well in the Family Activity Unit facilitating visits between children and birth parents on the verge of reuniting. After her internship ended, Dorcas wasn't ready to say goodbye, so she asked if she could stay on as a volunteer. "It's a wonderful experience," she says, "The children really need someone, and so do the parents."

Dorcas' sensitivity to the needs of both children and parents made her an ideal fit for our Visit Host program. Visit Hosts assist our families as they move toward re-unification,



Dorcas Ariyibi

supporting birth parents in their parenting role and ensuring the safety of children during visits at our offices or on outings in the community. "It's like being part of a family," says Dorcas, "I love it a lot."

"I'm in the middle sometimes," continues Dorcas, "but I can see that the families love each other and that the birth parents are working very hard to be involved with the children." Dorcas reaches out to parents who seem to need a little extra help. "There was one family where

the father would play with the child, but the mother wouldn't," she recalls, "So I asked her why. She told me it was because she was seriously ill and felt that she wouldn't live very long." Drawing on her medical background, Dorcas spoke at length with the woman about treatment advances, ultimately helping the mother come to the conclusion that "she shouldn't give up whatever time she has left with her baby."

Despite the competing demands of full-time employment, family life, and studying for her Community Health degree, Dorcas remains enthusiastic about her work in our Visit Host program. "I get attached to the children, and I really want to help people learn how to be parents. Also, I'm very interested in continuing to learn more about foster care. I'm glad they gave me the chance to continue working here."

If you are interested in becoming a Visit Host in our FBH program, please contact Sr. Sheila Kelly at 718-561-4340, x203 or Sheila_Kelly@goodshepherds.org.

Building Identity Through Photography

"Photography is a wonderful way to capture social justice issues," says Allison Milewski, who found it to be a natural way to combine her interests in activism and art. However, she soon began to feel uncomfortable attempting to document other people's lives and communities. "I have all the control, and they still don't have a voice. I realized I needed to facilitate bringing that to people." The Literacy Through Photography methodology pioneered by photographer Wendy Ewald, which focuses heavily on teaching photography to people who are more often the subject of pictures taken by someone else, caught Allison's attention. She began working with the concept, first in Cambodia where she was involved in an arts intervention project, and for the past year and a half as a volunteer in Good Shepherd's residential programs. "I'm an adequate photographer, but a much better teacher," she says, "I find it very exciting to put cameras in the hands of people who don't normally have access."

Allison, who works for an international NGO in the area of women's rights, and is also earning a certificate in Creative Arts Therapies, has taught a twelve-week course of the curricu-

lum she developed, PhotoForward, at each of our two Community Group Residences, Marian Hall and St. Helena's. PhotoForward provides basic instruction in photography, as well as empowering the students to use photography as a medium for self-exploration and self-expression, "They are amazing girls," she says of the residents, "Something about working with young people in foster care is very special. They can often be reticent about expressing themselves because society makes them feel very 'other.' Creating a self-portrait, which is highly important in learning photography, is a chance to say 'this is who I am' and make it public. It can be powerful for anyone, but especially for the traditionally voiceless. These girls have been let down in the past, so they don't always trust easily, but they were excited about getting to do this. I feel a great responsibility to provide this opportunity and recognize their work."

Allison is looking forward to working with our youth again soon. "They are remarkable young women, each one of them. They all have the internal resources to get what they need out of life, all they lack is the access." She is passionate about helping Good Shepherd to provide

our young people with tools and supports that will help them to take ownership of a more promising future. "This feels like exactly what I should be doing," she continues, "I feel lucky that these girls allow me to work with them."



A resident and her self-portrait

Photo: Allison Milewski

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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.

Corporate Partners

Corporate partnerships play a crucial role in our work and have greatly expanded the pool of volunteers available to us. Over the years, we have been fortunate enough to form relationships with numerous organizations that have generously made the enthusiasm and expertise of their employees available to our youth. Following are just a few key examples:

Credit Suisse is among our strongest allies in helping to prepare adolescents in our foster care programs for adulthood. Employees mentor our youth and offer various job-readiness workshops, projects and activities. Several years ago, when we identified education in personal financial literacy as a significant need, Credit Suisse created the annual 'Youth Economic Success (YES) Conference,' a full day of workshops and speakers coordinated by Nicole Parent on the subjects of finance, budgeting, reaching personal goals and achieving economic success.

Goldman Sachs' Community TeamWorks (CTW) program has provided us with volunteers and funding for a variety of projects. These have included helping to create sets for shows and other events performed by youth in our after-school programs, fun educational outings such as the Liberty Science Center, and customized Outward Bound® team building experiences for youth in our residential programs.

The Architects' Union, led by Mario Arbore of Arbore Design, has been giving the youth of our Red Hook Beacon Community Center program an invaluable up-close look at the fields of architecture, design and construction for several years through two annual events: 'Castles in the Sand,' where volunteer architects work in teams with our youth to build sandcastles and 'A Common Bond,' where LEGO® structures are similarly created. 'A Common Bond' has been greatly expanded in scope since The Robin Hood Foundation connected us with **Tudor Investment Corporation**, which has underwritten and provided volunteers for the last two events.

New York Life Insurance Company recently hosted a career panel for youth in our Brooklyn Young Adult Borough Center (YABC) programs. The Firm will shortly be launching a pilot program based on the Junior Achievement of New York curriculum to educate participants from our After-School Center at PS 32 on issues of financial literacy, work readiness and life preparedness.

Gap Inc. is providing funding and partnering with Good Shepherd to implement the Youth Signature Program for 20 youth from our programs. Through workshops, special retail training and internships in Gap stores, that will begin in July, participants will gain career exposure and critical pre-employment skills.

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Finance, Foreign Food and Friendship at the Foyer

better about themselves because they realize that they are special and worthy of such attention. These are the special moments, and we generally have one or more each night we visit the Foyer!" Phil agrees, and offers a quote from former NBA star turned philanthropist David Robinson that he feels is an excellent guideline to life: "The measure of your success is going to be how you serve other people," adding, "Thanks for providing us with the opportunity to be successful."

ANNUAL FUND

Good Shepherd stands at an especially exciting moment in our history as we come to the end of the first 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 which 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 serving 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.