

fall 2009 newsletter

# success stories



Photo: Chris Kreussling (Flatbush Gardener)

## Youth Volunteerism

### Good Shepherd Youth Give Back

The spirit of community service – individuals contributing their time and talents to make life better for us all – is a powerful one. Over the years, men and women from all walks of life have volunteered at our programs in many different ways, and all of them have made lasting impressions on our youth. So it comes as no surprise that Good Shepherd's young people possess the same desire to give back, to make a difference.

Creating opportunities for youth to serve their communities is an important strategy our programs embrace, with young people participating in a wide variety of service projects. Last year, youth volunteer activities included a group of students from Bronx Community High School who joined a bone marrow donor drive to help a six year-old girl fighting an especially fatal form of leukemia. Students from West Brooklyn Community High School walked alongside thousands of New Yorkers in the AIDS Walk, raising money to fight the disease. The 5th – 8th graders at the Brooklyn Beacon held a food drive in November to restock the community food pantry, baked apple pies with seniors at the local senior center, and helped out at a coat drive. Students from Automotive High School YABC volunteered their time at a soup kitchen. Middle school students at PS 32 served as “buddies” to younger children, reading with them and creating art projects for them to do together. Students from the Bronx Alternative Learning Center joined in a tree planting activity in Queens. And high school students in our Learning to Work programs in Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx participated in a number of community service projects including can drives and park clean ups.

Like other volunteers, our young people gain as much from these experiences as they give. They develop valuable leadership skills and learn to work as a team, but most importantly they “understand that they have valuable assets that the community needs,” says Brooklyn Division Director Jennifer Zanger, “They learn to see themselves as role models, as having something to offer others and their neighborhoods.”

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

Everywhere you turn these days people are talking about community service – in Washington DC, at City Hall, and in our neighborhoods. So many people are rediscovering the wonder of “giving back” and how good it feels to do something selfless for someone else. Good Shepherd has made a commitment to increase the number of service opportunities available within the agency by taking part in the Mayor's NYC Civic Corps initiative. We recently welcomed six Civic Corps members who will work alongside our staff for the next year to help identify program needs and recruit volunteers from the community to fill them.

Though we are expanding our volunteer program, Good Shepherd has always had a rich tradition of community service. Over the years, countless private individuals, corporations and service corps members (AmeriCorps, VISTA, Public Allies and Good Shepherd Volunteers) have touched the lives of our program participants - through mentoring, career exploration activities, arts projects, holiday gift drives and many other activities. As part of our strong focus on leadership development, we also find opportunities for youth in our programs to volunteer within their communities. They begin to recognize that they too have something important to offer and learn the value of contributing their time and talents.

Our volunteers become strong partners in our efforts with young people and families. This issue of Success Stories highlights just a few of those that have made significant contributions to our work and lasting impressions on our program participants.

I hope that these stories will inspire you to get involved, give back and make a difference. For more information on how you can help, please visit our website at [www.goodshepherds.org](http://www.goodshepherds.org).

Sincerely,

*Ashlette Lo Monaco*

### What's inside:

Longtime Volunteer, Longlasting Impact	2
Building Bridges Through the Arts	2
New Corporate Partnership Takes Off	3
A Connection that Endures	3
New Board Members	4
Annual Fund	4

## Longtime Volunteer, Longlasting Impact

Eight years ago, Donna Rosato's alumni group from The Journalism School at Columbia University wanted to find a service project that they could do together. A fellow alum, who lived near one of our Brooklyn programs, was familiar with Good Shepherd and suggested she reach out to the agency about possibilities. When Brooklyn Division Director Bonnie Genevich picked up the phone that day, little did she know that the woman on the other end of the line would become one of Good Shepherd's most dedicated volunteers.

The very first project she worked on – a one-day college essay writing workshop for high school seniors – with her alumni group was a great success. Donna enjoyed her participation so much that when Bonnie asked her to consider volunteering as a writing coach at Good Shepherd's annual college retreat she happily agreed. For the last five years, Donna has joined a group of staff and volunteers who give up a weekend to help high school juniors and seniors from across Good Shepherd's programs to write their college essays. The experience "is as rewarding and emotional as Bonnie had said it would be," says Donna.

During the weekend, writing coaches spend up to 15 hours with students brainstorming

ideas, guiding them through the writing process and assisting them with grammar. "Everyone that's been involved in Donna's group has just raved about her," says Bonnie, "She really connects with the students; her heart is always full of what's the next step for them." For her part, Donna is equally impressed by the youth. "I'm always very inspired by the young people. They all are so motivated. All of them have different strengths and challenges, but the kids who come to the retreat want to be there and are easy to work with," she says. One young woman, who was extremely shy, was having a difficult time finding something to write about herself. She and Donna talked some ideas through and discovered



that dancing was a real passion for this young woman. "She ended up writing her essay about that," remembers Donna, "and later on at the end of the retreat she danced for everyone. I watched her essay come to life."

As a personal finance journalist for Money Magazine, Donna routinely gives advice on financial matters. When the magazine partnered with City Harvest to develop a curriculum to teach low income New Yorkers the basics of money management, she knew she wanted to be involved. Since 2005, Donna and her colleagues have offered the popular course at the Chelsea Foyer at The Christopher, our supported housing program for youth who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness or aging out of foster care.

Each year, volunteers from Money teach the residents about a wide range of financial literacy topics including how to make and manage a budget, be smart about credit cards and debt, deal with identity theft and avoid scams. "The young people at the Foyer are on their own and really learning to live independently. They have real-time issues that we can help them with," says Donna, "They already have a lot of real life experiences that makes the class even richer." Throughout the course of the workshops, the young people will frequently tell the volunteers

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## Building Bridges Through the Arts

On any given Thursday night at Good Shepherd's Foster Boarding Home (FBH) program in the Bronx, you will see parents and children huddled together around a large table creating works of art. Thursday night is visiting night, a time when the birth parents of the children in our care are able to spend time together as a family and reconnect.

For the last fifteen years, Foster Pride - an organization that helps youth in foster care develop



their talents and build self-esteem through mentoring relationships and the arts -has served as an organizational "volunteer" with Good Shepherd, providing the supplies as well as the teaching artists and volunteers who facilitate the visiting night art projects each week. "The children have just a few hours with their parents, and the arts and crafts projects really enhance the visits," says Susan Kyle, Administrative Supervisor for Family Support Services. Lynn Schnurnberger, the Founder and Executive Director of Foster Pride adds, "Visitation can be an awkward situation, but art can provide a bridge." She remembers one child in the program, who was about 9 or 10, whose father had not been in her life for many years and she didn't know him very well. When he first started coming to visitation it was hard for them to connect until they worked on an art project together. "It was a way for them to find a way back to each other. There are a lot of stories like that," Lynn says.

Foster Pride teaching artists and volunteers have also worked with the young people in our FBH Adolescent Services program, producing

two large murals at the FBH offices and a DVD about aging out of foster care. Denise Padilla, the Administrative Supervisor for Adolescent Services finds that these artistic collaborations "give youth the opportunity to express themselves and really create something that belongs to them." Making the DVD was an especially powerful experience for our young people. "It gave them an opportunity to really express what its like to be in foster care, what they have learned and what's important to them," Denise says. Lynn agrees that providing the young people in our care with opportunities to have a voice is key to their development. "If you can have some kind of self-expression, then you have something that you can carry with you, something inside yourself that gives you confidence," she says.

Foster Pride has provided countless relationship building and confidence enriching experiences for our youth and their families. "They've been very good to us and to our kids over the years," says Susan. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with this inspirational organization for many years to come.

## New Corporate Partnership Takes Off

On a cold February day, 14 students from Good Shepherd's Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention program, Crossroads at Automotive High School in Greenpoint, Brooklyn arrived at UBS' Park Avenue offices for the very first time. That afternoon, the students and a group of volunteers from UBS participated in a "kick off" event for a new four month college preparation, career exploration and life-skills development workshop series.

Facilitated by UBS employees, the goal of the program was to expose vulnerable high school students to the world-of-work and adult role models who can help them build the skills necessary for success in college, careers and life. Every Monday afternoon from February to June, the students and the volunteers took over the UBS cafeteria and covered a number of topics, including resume writing and interviewing skills, workplace communication skills, conflict resolution & relationship building, developing effective study habits and time management skills.

The workshop series is an example of a highly successful corporate partnership. "It's been a wonderful partnership," says Katherine Brauer, the Crossroads program director, "the young people have really responded to the volunteers, who really care about them."

The caring, individualized attention the students received from their UBS mentors transformed their ideas about the world-of-work. "On the first day, I remember asking the students to talk about their feelings on working, more specifically, summertime employment,



volunteering and career development. They were somewhat interested, but I never picked up on any genuine sense of enthusiasm. Nine courses later, they were all talking about their plans to spend the summer either working at the new job they'd landed, continuing their education or volunteering," says Holly Gaddy, a UBS volunteer.

The Good Shepherd staff noticed significant changes in the young people as well. "One student was really closed, hardly spoke. He had good attendance and academics, but he didn't have a lot of friends," remembers Katherine. "His counselor thought he would benefit from a social activity like the mentoring program. He just blossomed. He pushed himself to be involved with the other kids, and I think this is

a direct result of the UBS mentoring program," she says. The staff also found that the majority of the students who participated in the program improved both their attendance and their academics. And most importantly, not one of the students who participated in the UBS workshops dropped out of school.

Toward the end of the program, the volunteers also treated the young people to a field trip to the UBS trading floor in Stamford, CT. It was a particularly thrilling experience for the students to see the largest trading floor in the world and, for many of the youth, the occasion marked the very first time they had been outside of not only New York State, but New York City! In return the young people proudly

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### A CONNECTION THAT ENDURES

Linda didn't want a mentor. The 17 year-old, who was living in one of Good Shepherd's group residences for young women, routinely volunteered to help the mentoring coordinator, Shirley Salomon, recruit mentors for other young people, but she didn't want one for herself. Shirley didn't give up on her though and finally convinced Linda to meet a woman named Esther, who had recently moved to New York and was looking for a volunteer opportunity.

Good Shepherd's mentoring program pairs young people from our foster care programs with caring adults who provide them with support, friendship and guidance, while helping expand their horizons. We strive to ensure that no youth leaves our care without a permanent connection to a responsible adult. Usually, that role is fulfilled by a family member, but in many cases

mentors have provided youth with that permanent connection, maintaining their relationship with a young person long after he or she has left our care. Linda found that kind of relationship in Esther, her mentor of seven years.

Esther, who had raised two daughters of her own, had specific reasons for becoming a mentor. "I was missing my teenage daughters and their friends so I felt like it would be nice to be in touch with that age group," she says. Linda was skeptical at first, "I didn't want someone to try to be my mother," she says. While Linda lived at the group home, the two met regularly – playing pool, going out to eat – slowly building their friendship. Esther found that to Linda, their friendship came to mean "that she had an adult in her life that was hers. She could count on me as someone who really cared about her." After

two years together, Esther introduced Linda to her husband and her daughters. When Linda invited Esther to attend her family's Thanksgiving dinner, they became something much more. They became family.

Now in her 20s, Linda is studying for an associate's degree in human services and working as a counselor. Esther is still very much a part of her life, "The other day she met my boyfriend - it was like meeting my parents. I really value her friendship. She's had a big impact on my life, and she's helped me get where I am today," says Linda.

In November, Esther will be moving back to her native Canada, "Linda's worried that she's going to lose the relationship. I've told her that we're family and that's not going to happen," she says.

## Board of Directors

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*continued from page 3*

### New Corporate Partnership Takes Off

hosted the concluding dinner for the program at Automotive High School. They were glad to have the opportunity to take their mentors on a tour of the school and introduce them to their environment.

“Thanks to the commitment of our 30 volunteers, the life-skills workshop series developed into a successful mentor program,” says Betsy Lewis, UBS community affairs program manager. “The experience was deeply meaningful to both the volunteers and the students alike, and we look forward to continuing the partnership.”

While there are many ways to measure the success of a workshop series like this, perhaps the most telling is that when asked what they would change about the program, many of the students responded to the question with the same refrain: “More time.”

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### Longtime Volunteer, Longlasting Impact

about adjustments they've made in managing their money. As a result of their participation in the course, residents have fixed errors on their credit reports, opened savings accounts, and one young woman even returned an expensive pair of boots after deciding it would be wiser to put the money toward paying down a credit card.

For Donna, the link between both of her volunteer projects is “the young folks and how inspiring they are. I get much more out of participating in these programs than I'm giving,” she says. “I've learned a lot about communicating to a group of young people and how to bring a group together to build trust and understanding.”

## New Board Members

We are pleased to welcome four new members to Good Shepherd's Board of Directors: Jeffrey F. Buckalew, Jeffrey M. Kottkamp, Daniel Miller and William J. Whelan, III.

Mr. Buckalew is the Co-Head of U.S. Mergers and Acquisitions for Greenhill. Prior to joining the firm in 1996, he worked for both Salomon Brothers and Chemical Bank. Mr. Buckalew holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of North Carolina and an M.B.A. from the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina.

Mr. Kottkamp is the Regional Managing Partner of Deloitte's Northeast Audit and Enterprise Risk Services (AERS), a member of the Executive Committee of Deloitte's Northeast Region and the National AERS business, and serves on the Board of Directors of Deloitte & Touche LLP. He holds a B.S. in Accounting from Southern Illinois University and has participated in Executive Education programs at the Kellogg School of Business, Wharton, Columbia Business School, and IMD in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Mr. Miller joined Credit Suisse, one of Good Shepherd's longtime corporate partners, in 1996. Today he is a Managing Director in the Credit Risk Management Group where he is responsible for counterparty credit risk for the Americas. Mr. Miller holds a B.A. in Economics and Iberio-American Studies from the University of Wisconsin and an M.B.A. from The American University.

Mr. Whelan joined Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP in 1984 and is a Partner in the Corporate Department and currently the firm's Managing Partner – Administration. A New York City native, he holds a B.A. from the University of Virginia and a J.D. from the Fordham University School of Law.

## 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](http://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.

## ANNUAL FUND

Partner with Good Shepherd as we work to help young people build stronger connections to family, school and community. As reflected in this newsletter, we have been working to strengthen, deepen and expand our services so that more young people can be helped in making a safe passage to self-sufficiency. In these uncertain times, your support is all the more important, as we continue to 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](http://www.goodshepherds.org).

Good Shepherd Services  
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