

spring 2010 newsletter

success stories



Students hone their interviewing skills

NEW CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP

Students Savor a Taste of the Future

When you were a teenager...“What were the posters hanging on your bedroom wall?” “What was your curfew?” “What was your favorite TV show?”

These are not questions that you would expect senior level executives at Barclays Capital to have to answer, but when posed by participants from GSS’ Aiming High work readiness program at University Heights High School in the Bronx, they happily obliged. The questions, or really the answers, served as the ice breaker activity for Good Shepherd’s inaugural employee volunteer event, an interviewing skills project, with Barclays Capital. It was clear though that any tentative icicles there may have been at the onset were soon melted away by the volunteers’ warm and welcoming demeanor and the students’ enthusiasm and receptivity.

The event was held on March 3rd at the firm’s office near Times Square. Fifteen students from Aiming High participated in one-to-one mock interviews followed by individual feedback with Barclays Capital volunteers. For many of the students it was their first time in a Manhattan office building and the sense of anticipation and awe was palpable. Aiming High program director Joan Fox-Bow described the subway ride as “electric with excitement.” The light-hearted ice breaker paved the way for the more serious interview questions. Students assumed an insightful tone in their responses as they contemplated questions designed to measure their knowledge and varied skill sets within seven categories: general interest and academic experience; leadership; teamwork; drive and aspiration; initiative; presence; and humility, adaptability and maturity. Questions such as, “Where do you see yourself over the next five years—professionally and personally?” “Is going to college important to you, and, if yes, why?” and “How have you grown or changed in your high school years?” prompted youth to reflect upon their choices and goals and helped to hone their articulation skills. Barclays Capital volunteers made youth feel at ease by providing encouragement and acting as coaches rather than judges, result-

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

Winston Churchill once said, “If we are together nothing is impossible.” At Good Shepherd, our commitment to this notion of “togetherness,” of “partnership” is at the very crux of our work. By banding together with schools, other non-profits, and corporations both large and small, we are able to strengthen youth and families with a safety net of services, thus creating more positive and thriving communities for us all.

In this edition of “Success Stories,” we are delighted to tell you about three such partnerships that are having a great impact on our young people: our longtime association with a Brooklyn elementary school, a new collaboration with a major international corporation, and a program that cultivates relationships with a variety of businesses throughout the city. Each of these partnerships provides our youth with the supports and opportunities necessary to tap into their vast inner resources and fully develop innate talents and abilities that might otherwise lie dormant.

These are just a few examples of the many partners we have worked with over the years. We also continue to be deeply grateful to the hundreds of donors, volunteers, and friends who have aligned themselves with our mission to help vulnerable children, youth, and families to make a safe passage to self-sufficiency.

Standing alone, the obstacles facing the communities in which we work might seem insurmountable, but by standing together we have created real and lasting change. Thank you for being a partner in this work.

Sincerely,

Shellette Lo Monaco

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Transformative Internship Experiences

Like many communities in Brooklyn and throughout the city, Bushwick is a neighborhood that's changing. Long one of the poorest communities in the city, the first sprouts of change are beginning to appear with new businesses opening and local corporations investing in Bushwick's revitalization.

Good Shepherd is contributing to these efforts by helping neighborhood youth to imagine better lives for themselves and their families through the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP). YAIP is a job-readiness and paid internship program for youth, ages 16-24, who are neither in school nor working. The program helps them to re-engage in their futures—getting a job, going back to school—with the ultimate goal of becoming self-sufficient.

Each year, YAIP offers three 14 week cycles, 25 hours per week, with 30 participants per cycle. During the first three weeks, youth participate in a series of workshops in which they learn valuable job skills such as appropriate dress, workplace etiquette, resume writing, and interviewing techniques. They are then matched with an employer and spend the remaining eleven weeks of the program working at their internship site.

The changes in the young people who take part in the program can be dramatic. For program director Amy Hyman, one young man in particular stands out. “When Anthony came to us, he was very ‘street.’ Every other word out



Photo: Laura Dwight

of his mouth was a curse,” she remembers. “He really struggled with the program—we honestly weren't sure he was going to make it. He was interested in the culinary and social services fields so we matched him with an internship at the Food Bank of New York City. The supervisor there took him on and set clear goals and expectations. It was the first time he felt like people needed and depended on him. And from then on he was consistent in the program. The Food

Bank loved him and hired him after his internship ended. Now, it's a very different Anthony. He loves his job. He's thinking about his future and his education. It's just been a great experience to watch his transformation,” she says.

The program has cultivated relationships with a wide variety of internship sites to expose our youth to the wealth of career options available to them. In addition to the Food Bank, the program has placed interns at Holland &

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Corporate Partnership

ing in the students' trust and active participation. Students extolled the event and its merit in teaching them invaluable career and life skills. “I learned how it would be in an interview setting and I learned what things I should say up front and what things should be kept to myself. I could go on and on about what I learned in that short time. All around it was a great thing,” said Wilmer. Gloria echoed Wilmer's sentiments, “Speaking to the people that work there also opened my eyes to how sometimes what we want to be can come true...It was a wonderful and eye-opening experience and I'm grateful Aiming High allowed me to partake in it.” Francel summed up the experience by stating that the event was “just a perfect taste of what the future has in store for me.”

Following the interviews, students and volunteers shared dinner together, creating a more informal setting for conversation and shar-

ing. Even after the event was technically over, many of the volunteers remained, chatting with students and encouraging them to reach out with any questions or requests for guidance or assistance with their college or job searches. It was touching to see the bond that was formed in such a short period of time. According to Joan, the students “were thrilled that these high level executives would take such a genuine interest in them and truly offer themselves, both at the event and by sharing their business cards, as resources to give advice and help them out.”

While this is Good Shepherd's first volunteer event with Barclays Capital, our partnership officially began in November 2009 when we received a very generous grant from the firm. John Stathis, Managing Director and Head of Distribution, Americas, attended the event and stated, “Barclays Capital is pleased to support the exceptional work of Good Shepherd Services

and we look forward to seeing our partnership grow through employee engagement projects in the coming years.” Barclays Capital's charitable giving is centered upon their three-fold, employee-driven philosophy: to bank on brighter futures, to look after local communities, and to support charity at work. We are honored that the company has chosen to support Good Shepherd thereby enabling us to continue “looking after” the communities where we have rooted our services. Our kick-off event demonstrated to us that Barclays Capital shares our belief in the strengths inherent in young people and their ability to transform themselves by presenting youth with the tools for transformation through strength building activities with caring volunteers. To paraphrase Francel, we believe that our pioneer project was just a perfect taste of the possibilities in store for us thanks to our partnership with Barclays Capital.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

Essentially a community center within the PS 15 school building, the Red Hook Beacon is open after school, in the evenings, over the weekend, and during the summer. Each year, more than 1,500 children, teens, and adults participate in activities at the center, ranging from our after-school and summer camp programs to evening basketball leagues and family nights. The Beacon is a central and valued part of Red Hook, bringing people of all ages together, keeping youth safe and engaged in positive activities that broaden their horizons, while promoting strong families and a more stable community.

True to its name, since 1991 Good Shepherd's Beacon in Red Hook has served as a source of light, hope and guidance for young people growing up in this high-poverty Brooklyn neighborhood, where 70% of residents live in public housing projects and where the impact of drugs, crime, teen pregnancy, and dropping out are all too familiar. Generations of children and youth have literally "grown up" at the Beacon and have seen their life direction and their community change for the better as a result.

Adrian, Naturel, and Z'Andreia, for example, have been coming to the Beacon since they were in first grade. Today, at 12, 14 and 24 years-old respectively, they have each remained involved through their participation in the Beacon's Pathways to Leadership program, which has helped them take a different approach to school, work, relationships, and their role in the community. Designed to keep young people ages 9-21 connected to the Beacon as they transition to middle school, high school and beyond, this innovative program creates a ladder of leadership with five different levels. Participants take on progressively more responsible roles at the Beacon as they build skills and move from being after-school program participants to young child care professionals during their adolescent years.

Acknowledging that his behavior was "bad"

in fourth grade and that he used to fool around, 12 year-old Adrian says that he has learned to take life more seriously since he became a fifth grade Challenger and now a sixth grade Pathfinder. As a Challenger, Adrian spent the school year learning to collaborate and show initiative by participating in community service and team building projects, such as going apple picking and then baking pies with seniors at a local center. Moving up to the Pathfinders has required Adrian and his peers to play a larger role in planning and organizing bigger service projects such as coordinating the annual Halloween party. They have been encouraged to begin thinking of themselves as young professionals as they serve as ambassadors at the Beacon, explore careers and participate in job-readiness workshops. Says Adrian: "Challengers taught me to do good in school and work together with other people. Pathfinders showed me how I could be in life. I have learned that I have a lot to give my community."

Naturel progressed through both Challengers and Pathfinders and was selected through an interview process to be a Leader-in-Training (LIT), the next level of participation on the leadership ladder for a small group of 13 to 16 year-olds. She receives a stipend and serves as an intern, helping group leaders supervise children

in the younger after-school groups. Twice a week, she participates in group team building activities and training about work habits, child development and public speaking. Naturel says she has learned to be a good role model to the younger children with whom she works, to help them understand right from wrong, and to embrace their individual strengths. This has resonated in other aspects of her life: "I didn't want to do my homework every night but a girl in my group wanted to do hers and watching the dedication of this six year-old made me think 'If she could do it, I could do it. If not now, when am I going to get it together?'—and so I did."

Z'Andreia stands at the top rung of the leadership ladder. Previously a program aide, she is now in her fourth year as a group leader, a part-time staff member responsible for planning and managing the activities of a group of 25 children in the Beacon's after-school program. "Growing up, I was always anxious to be in the leadership groups," she says, "I wanted to be like the program aides and group leaders who were role models for me." Through training at the Beacon and her experience on the job, she says she has learned a lot about how children think and why they behave the way they do. She now hopes to become a child psychologist. Z'Andreia is one of ten of the Beacon's 21 staff who were once program participants, a powerful testament to the strength of our Pathways program and the sense of community and continuity it is helping to promote at the Beacon.

One of the city's first eleven Beacons, our Red Hook center has often been looked to as a leader, as more than 100 Beacons have been created locally and in four other cities across the country. Recently, our staff was asked to document the model practices we have developed through our Pathways to Leadership program and to share them in panels and workshops for the national Beacon community and others in the youth development field. Adrian, Naturel and Z'Andreia have been enthusiastic participants, demonstrating how the program has empowered all aspects of their lives as they have gained confidence, a sense of purpose and a deeper connection to the community in their gradual transformation from participants to leaders.



Photo: Laura Dwight

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Transformative Internship Experiences

Knight, a law firm where young people gain great exposure to the corporate world. Metro Construction takes five youth each cycle and has hired six on as employees. Wyckoff Medical Center offers exposure to multiple experiences in the medical field. Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter has maintenance, culinary, and administrative internships and offers our youth a really fantastic opportunity to see a social service agency at work. The Von King Cultural Arts Center—where the YAIP graduation ceremony is held—offers catering internships so the interns in the culinary program cook the graduation meal for their peers.

Since its launch in 2008, more than 240 young people have participated in YAIP, with 95% of them completing the program. The majority of them are now working or enrolled in an educational or vocational program. “Because of the job market, we are working to get more young people back in high school, a GED program, college, or vocational program, in addition to employment” Amy says.

Kim is a wonderful example of a young person who not only gained valuable work

experience through her participation in YAIP, but found her career goal through her internship and is now back in school to pursue it. “I took a test to determine what field I should work in. It showed that the medical field is best for me,” she says. “My internship was at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center. I started off in pediatrics, on the ward I would page people, answer the phone, talk to the patients, sometimes reading to them.”

Kim is now attending Medgar Evers College and studying to be either a pediatric nurse or a pediatrician. Though her internship is over, she still volunteers her time at the Wyckoff Heights Medical Center, and supervises the current YAIP interns. “It’s interesting because I was in their position. Looking back from where I came from to where I am now, I couldn’t imagine it then. I didn’t think I would ever be working at a hospital,” she says.

A new group of young people is currently in the midst of their internship experiences. We look forward to seeing how this opportunity will impact their futures for the better as it has for Anthony and Kim.

GO GREEN!

The Success Stories newsletter is now available electronically. Published three times a year, the newsletter keeps you up-to-date on Good Shepherd’s latest program activities. If you would prefer to receive Success Stories via email, rather than by mail, please contact Nada Awad at 212-243-7070, ext. 313 or email her at Nada_Awad@goodshepherds.org.

MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM

Good Shepherd now has a monthly giving program! A simple and easy way to support our work with New York City children, young people and families, monthly contributions can be made in any amount. For more information about monthly giving, please contact Nicole Marie Boisvert at 212-243-7070, ext. 327 or via email Nicole_Boisvert@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.

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.

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Good Shepherd Services recently launched a Facebook page and would like to invite those who use Facebook to become a fan of our work, by connecting to the GSS page. The page features links to videos about how our work has impacted individual participants, as well as photos of our programs in action. A link to the Facebook page is provided on the homepage of the GSS website (www.goodshepherds.org) or just type “Good Shepherd Services” into the Facebook search engine.