

Lines of Opportunity

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INSIDE THIS EDITION



Bronx Y Roads Center
Opens

2



3rd Annual Summer
Soirée

3



The Maura Clark
Ita-Ford Center

3

BETWEEN THE LINES



[Randy Peers](#)
[Chief Executive Officer](#)

“Smart” growth – expansion without compromising quality or undermining an organization’s core areas of expertise – is as important in the non-profit sector as it is for private companies. OBT has undergone impressive growth since 2006 – operating revenues increased 130%; full-time staff expanded from 29 to 71; the number of people served annually increased four-fold and; our locations expanded from two to six. From my perspective as CEO, our growth has been “steady” and “strategic”.

At OBT, we are very proud of these numbers. The agency rose to the challenge of serving more people, and did so within our core areas of competency – job training, education and employment. Where a need presented itself that wasn’t within our scope, we developed strong partnerships with other organizations that had a particular expertise, and we leveraged their strengths to benefit our clients. Along the way also turned down opportunities for growth either because they didn’t fit our core mission or because they represented a risky financial proposition. OBT chose not to undertake in-school youth programming or a charter school initiative, nor did we pursue acquisitions of well-known competitor organizations that were not financially sound. Instead we added new training modules, such as Medical Administrative Assistant training, and expanded our internship programs into new neighborhoods. This allowed us to grow by increasing our services while minimizing financial risk.

In this issue you will read about OBT’s busy summer of expansion. The highlight was our opening of the second Y Roads Center in the Bronx, in collaboration with our most important strategic partner, the YMCA of Greater New York. Each new Y Roads Center means 500 more “opportunity” youth will receive the comprehensive menu of services and support they need from both the YMCA and OBT. With two Y Roads Centers up and running, we will soon begin planning for our third. You will also read about a small but effective Bushwick literacy organization, the Maura Clarke-Ita Ford Center (MCIF), who found a stable home and parent in OBT. MCIF has a twenty-year record of providing adult literacy and English language classes to immigrants who live in the Bushwick and Ridgewood communities. This fall MCIF will officially merge into OBT to become the MCIF Adult Literacy Program at our Bushwick Workforce Resource Center. Having MCIF at OBT will enable us to expand our own adult literacy programming in Bushwick and Ridgewood, two communities with some of the highest numbers of non-English speaking populations in NYC. Through this successful merger, MCIF clients will now have access to all of OBT’s employment and job training supports. Smart growth indeed!

Bronx Y Roads Center Opens

This summer, OBT in partnership with the YMCA of Greater New York, celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Jamaica Y Roads Center. The Y Roads model was created to address the challenge of NYC's "Out of School Youth"—young people who are neither in school nor working. The Y Roads model tailors 360-degree programs and support based service environments with elements that include high school equivalency courses, workforce development training and job placement, college access, counseling services, and youth-friendly medical health services and screenings. In just one year, Y Roads Jamaica exceeded its goal and provided services to over 400 young adults.

The YMCA, in partnership with OBT, is now expanding the Y Roads model in a second location to the Mott Haven community of the Bronx at 332 E. 149th Street. The Center will replicate the highly successful service plan provided at the Jamaica Center, aiming to provide assistance to 400 to 500 young adults in its first year. Participants will eventually be able to take advantage of a new YMCA facility several blocks away that will begin construction in 2015.

"Just over a year ago, we opened the first Y Roads Center in Jamaica, Queens. Since that time, hundreds of young people have worked with Y and OBT staff to finish high school, get a job, find a place to live and start on a positive and productive path to a better life," said Jack Lund, President & CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York. "The new Y Roads Center in the Bronx will serve as a true beacon of hope for young people in need of vital social services."

Mott Haven shares the highest rate of out of school and out of work youth at 42.4% and the highest rate of youth in poverty at 44% within New York City.

"I think we are going into the Bronx, especially the South Bronx, at a time when the people can really benefit from our services," said Pablo Sierra, Director of OBT Programs - Y Roads Bronx. "We already see students traveling long distances to both our Brooklyn and Queens locations to access our services."

"Y Roads is both innovative in terms of its comprehensive programming, but it is also one of the most successful partnership stories in the field of youth services today," said OBT CEO Randy Peers. "By leveraging different strengths of both the YMCA and OBT, our young adults stand a much better chance to succeed."

"The amazing contribution that OBT has had on North Brooklyn's young professionals speaks for itself. Personally, working with many of them as interns, I know that there is significant value in the development model and job placement set forth by OBT," said Council Member Antonio Reynoso. "As one of the poorest counties in the entire state of New York, there is an obvious need for resources for our neighbors in the Bronx. As OBT continues to meet the needs of one of our most vulnerable demographics throughout the city, we can rest assured that we will soon be welcoming empowered employed youth in our communities in the Bronx."

For more information on Y Roads Bronx, please contact Pablo Sierra, Director of OBT Programs - Y Roads Bronx at psierra@obtjobs.org. To learn more about the YMCA of Greater New York, visit www.ymcanyc.org



Y Roads Jamaica Ribbon Cutting



Y Roads Jamaica students participate in Debate Day



First Y Roads Graduation

Y Roads Bronx staff spreading the word



Third Annual Summer Soirée



On Tuesday, June 3, 2014, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT), held its Third Annual Summer Soirée and Silent Auction to raise funds for its programs. Fox 5 News Reporter Kerry Drew served as emcee for the evening at the beautiful Battery Gardens in lower Manhattan.

Brooklyn Deputy Borough President Diana Reyna received the 2014 OBT Community Leadership Award for her outstanding commitment to her community through government service and advocacy as a New York City Council Member for twelve years. "OBT's unique integrated model builds accountability, discipline, and confidence, which helps our neighbors recognize their full potential. I've had the tremendous opportunity of working with their empowered youth, who have been instrumental in the productivity of my office. Borough President Eric Adams and I applaud OBT for being an essential part of One Brooklyn, and we look forward to our continued relationship."

The evening also honored Senior Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of Investors Bank Domenick A. Cama with the 2014 OBT Corporate Leadership Award for his focus on corporate social responsibility and active involvement in the communities that Investors serves. Mr. Cama spoke about the bank's commitment to its core values and the community through employee volunteerism and financial resources to support worthy causes. "OBT is one of the most effective programs that I have seen to help the disadvantaged in our neighborhoods believe in their own self-worth and advance towards self-sufficiency and financial security. Thanks to the leadership of Randy Peers and his staff, OBT is helping people succeed," said Domenick Cama.

OBT was joined by Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Carlos Menchaca, and Dan Wiley from Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez's office, as well as over 250 supporters, community leaders, and employers.

The event marked the fundraising launch for its sixth location and second Y Roads Center which will be located in the Bronx.



Brooklyn Deputy
Borough President -
Diana Reyna



Senior Executive Vice
President & Chief Operating
Officer of Investors Bank -
Domenick A. Cama

Premier Sponsor: Investors Bank

The event was sponsored by

Silver Sponsors: The Morrison Foerster Foundation • Industry City • Salmar Properties LL • The YMCA • Lutheran HealthCare

The Maura Clarke-Ita Ford Center



THE
MAURA CLARKE-ITA FORD
CENTER

The Maura Clarke-Ita Ford (MCIF) Center was named after the two MaryKnoll Sisters, Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, who were murdered in El Salvador in 1980 while tirelessly advocating and working for the poor. MCIF, in the honor of the MaryKnoll sisters, has spent the last 20 years providing English as a Second Language, Citizenship, Computer, and Entrepreneurship classes to

immigrant women and families in Bushwick. Last spring, MCIF found itself displaced and in search of a new home, but with real estate markets on the rise and a reduced budget, MCIF was in a crisis to relocate. The MCIF Board of Directors decided that in order to insure long-term sustainability, MCIF would need to create a strategic partnership with another non-profit organization. MCIF key supporters and foundations connected MCIF with OBT. "We were thrilled to find a great partner who understood our needs," said former Executive Director, Janet Marcic. "OBT had space available and complementary programming, allowing us to retain our students and instructors, and seamlessly continue our services. Additionally, our students are also able to take advantage of additional OBT services such as job placement assistance, college access, and legal assistance through their Office of New Americans."

MCIF plans to fully merge with OBT by next year while maintaining its identity and programming. "We truly thank everyone who helped make this collaboration possible and especially our donors and supporters who have been instrumental in getting us to this point in which we could merge and continue our vital services," said Christine Morrison, MCIF's Board Chair. "By joining forces, OBT and MCIF will serve the community better than they could on their own. It's a great result for all concerned," said John MacIntosh of the New York Merger, Acquisition, and Collaboration Fund which provided financial support for the partnership.

Randy Peers, OBT's CEO stated, "OBT has worked with MCIF for many years and I have always admired the founders of the organization, along with the quality services it has provided in the Bushwick community for decades. OBT is excited to add their programming to its Adult Literacy portfolio as it strengthens both of our abilities to better serve the community's needs."

OBT Welcomes New Full-Time Staff

Annie Norbeck Chief Program Officer



Annie Norbeck recently joined our senior leadership team as our new Chief Program Officer (CPO). As CPO, Ms. Norbeck will have oversight for all OBT youth and adult programming. She was most recently Assistant Commissioner of Workforce Operations at the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS), where she oversaw program management, operations and performance of the 15 Workforce1 Career Centers across the five boroughs, as well as the Workforce1 Veterans initiative. Before joining SBS, Ms. Norbeck served as Marketing Director for a leading Baltimore architecture firm and manager of a large mid-Atlantic art gallery. Originally from the Chicago area, Ms. Norbeck holds a Master in Public Administration from NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and a B.F.A. from the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Janet Marcic Director of Outreach, Recruitment & Community Relations



Janet Marcic joined OBT on August 4th as the Director of OBT's new Outreach, Recruitment, and Community Relations department. Ms. Marcic brings many years of experience as the former Executive Director of the Maura Clarke-Ita Ford Center and also has a background in economic development. Before MCIF, she worked at the Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation, SBS and the NYC Economic Development Corporation. Ms. Marcic holds a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies from Stony Brook University.

Adriana Lovera

Anchoring Achievement in Mexican Communities Coordinator (BWRC)

Alan Moore

Corporate Recruiter (Bushwick)

Amarilis Torres

Program Associate (YAIP, Bed Stuy)

Anthony Alexis

Youth Coordinator (YAIP, Bed Stuy)

Crystal Cunningham

English Instructor (Y Roads Jamaica)

Dallis Stamps

Business Math Instructor (Sunset Park)

Diana Rodriguez

Program Associate (Y Roads Bronx)

Edwin Reyes

Senior Program Associate (Bushwick)

Elizabeth Diaz

Program Associate (Sunset Park)

Frederick Johnson

Corporate Recruiter (Y Roads Bronx)

Harold Parrales

HSE Instructor (Y Roads Bronx)

Iliana Gomez

Retention Specialist/
Youth Counselor (Y Roads Jamaica)

Lance Darby

Retention Specialist/
Quality Assurance Monitor (Y Roads Bronx)

Leatrice Stewart

Program Associate (Y Roads Jamaica)

Lewis A. Cabarrouy

Senior Program Associate (Bushwick)

Lorraine Bell

Senior Program Associate (Bushwick)

Marcos Luque

Job Readiness/
Vocational Skills Instructor (Bushwick)

Michael Kaufman

Math Instructor (Y Roads Bronx)

Muzette Torres

Senior Program Counselor (Y Roads Bronx)

Salvador Fuentes

Computer Instructor (Sunset Park)

Tania Lee Pabey Arroyo

Medical Administrative Assistant Youth Coordinator (Bushwick)

Vincent Ty

Office Procedures/
Computer Instructor (Y Roads Bronx)

Wanda Sanchez

Quality Assurance Specialist (Sunset Park)

Happenings Around OBT



OSY Trainees
at Phantom
of the Opera
sponsored by
by CEI-PEA

Sept.
2014



OBT Staff
Kick-off Day



Aug.
2014



Randy Peers at Brooklyn
Jobs 2015 Delegation
Project

Sept.
2014



OBT Represented at CB 7
Youth Connect

Oct.
2014



Debate Day at
Brooklyn College

June
2014



OSY Service
Learning
at The United
Senior Center

Sept.
2014



Record Number of GED's

The New York State Education Department announced in March 2013 that it was awarding CTB McGraw Hill the contract to implement the state's new high school equivalency exam called the Test for Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC). The new TASC exam that was to be administered starting January 2014 is aligned to the Common Core Standards and is significantly more rigorous than the previous GED. It was also announced that individuals would only have until December 2013 for their existing partial scores to count, creating a closing window of opportunity for thousands of near-passers to take action before their prior efforts toward achieving a high school equivalency diploma would expire. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow stepped up in 2013 and secured a record number of GEDs in its 31-year history. 156 young adults in its Out of School Youth Education and Job Training Program accomplished the first step in enhancing their future by earning their GED.

OBT partners with The New York City Department of Education District 79 to provide high school equivalency instruction along with its workforce training.



"OBT exploded with GEDs in the last quarter, making them the leading nonprofit organization in GED attainment within District 79," says NYC

Department of Education Pathways to Graduation Assistant Principal Tom Mancuso. "OBT's innovative program model is a more conducive learning environment than traditional high schools for many young adults searching to find their inner genius. What OBT has been able to do in Brooklyn is impressive, especially considering today's climate of both gentrification and a slow economy. OBT offers a beacon of hope for so many who are searching for that alternative option for success in communities that have been offered very little options for low-income residents."

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BUSHWICK
25 Thornton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206
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**BUSHWICK
WORKFORCE
RESOURCE CENTER**
280 Wyckoff Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11237
Tel: 718-381-3222

BED-STUY
20 New York Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11216
Tel: 718-399-9700

Y ROADS JAMAICA
161-04 Jamaica Avenue
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Micro Center Opens its First Store in Sunset Park

friendly and effective customer service, and departments that include an extensive build-your-own components area and full-service tech support. Founded in 1979, the national chain recently opened their first store in Brooklyn at the newly renovated Liberty View Industrial Plaza.

"Our Regional Human Resources Manager heard about OBT's great work and decided to set up a hiring office at their location," explained the Brooklyn Micro Center's General Manager Joseph Benincasa. "It was truly a symbiotic relationship from the beginning. We were able to really get to know the organization and appreciate how well prepared their candidates are for the workforce. We do a lot of on the job training, but we cannot teach someone how to interact with customers and to be responsible. Through OBT's mission and programming, they instill these qualities within their participants."

Christian Alvarado, a former OBT trainee who started at Micro Center last January along with several other OBT participants, wanted to gain experience in customer service and had an interest in computers.



Micro Center quickly hired him as a Customer Service Representative and trained him in additional areas of internet pick-up and returns. *"We like to see our employees grow within the company, so we try to expose them to various opportunities with the aim of retaining and promoting them"* says Mr. Benincasa.

As part of this new collaboration, both organizations hope to improve opportunities for local community residents. For more information on Micro Center please visit their website at www.microcenter.com