

Lines of Opportunity

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Summer 2013

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BETWEEN THE LINES



Randy Peers
Executive Director

OBT's fiscal year end is June 30th. By all measures financial, programmatic and otherwise, OBT had a great year. In this edition of our newsletter, we highlight many of those successes, and we are thankful to all of you who have supported us along the way.

However, it is at this time of year that I also turn my attention to what lies ahead. The one thing that is clear is the next 12 months will bring a good deal of change and uncertainty for OBT and many other NYC-based service organizations. For the first time in 12 years, we will witness a transition to a new Mayor, and with that, a new mayoral administration filled with new commissioners and agency leaders who play an important role in supporting the work and mission of organizations like ours. We will also see many new faces in the NYC Council, with term limits forcing out two-thirds of our legislators. While change can be a good thing, as Executive Director I worry about how the changes may impact resources and public policy priorities.

OBT's mission is about empowerment. To use the cliché, we're about giving a "hand up not a hand out." For sure there is a great need for organizations that provide a safety net for vulnerable New Yorkers. At OBT, however, we believe the way to move beyond such supports is through education, job training and employment. These three areas make up the core of OBT's mission: a mission that has existed for 30 years and will continue until every disconnected young adult has an opportunity to pursue higher education, a meaningful career – or both! Each youth that we help get back on track is a young adult who becomes an asset to society and not a liability.

It is this message of empowerment that I believe resonates with all of you. In fact, the fastest growing revenue category in our five million dollar annual budget is individual contributions. These donations are so critically important because these funds tend to be more flexible than government resources and can be used to support some of the more creative elements of our work. This said, there are ways to contribute to OBT beyond writing a check. Consider such things as participating in a career panel, being a volunteer mentor, setting up a speed networking session for youth at your firm, becoming an internship site, and most of all – consider hiring an OBT graduate. Because in the end, the road to empowerment can run through you in so many ways!



Greater New York YMCA CEO & President Jack Lund, OBT Executive Director Randy Peers, Jamaica YMCA Board Chair David Thomas, OBT Deputy Executive Director Marjorie Parker, DYCD Commissioner Jeanne Mullgrav, Deputy Majority Leader of the New York City Council Leroy Comrie, Jamaica YMCA Executive Director Cedric Dew, OBT Board Chair Sean Lafferty

Y Roads Center Opens in Jamaica, Queens

On May 23rd, OBT, in partnership with The YMCA of Greater New York, celebrated the opening of its first Y Roads Center with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony in Jamaica, Queens. The Y Roads Center will help address the challenge of NYC's "disconnected youth" -- young people who are neither in school nor working. This strategic partnership will combine the Y's historic strengths as a youth service provider with OBT's proven expertise in job training and workforce development.

The Y Roads Center will create tailored 360-degree programs and support based service environments with elements that include: General Educational Development (GED) courses, workforce development training, job placement, counseling services, and youth-friendly mental health services and screenings. Jamaica was chosen as the Y Roads pilot community due to its disproportionate rate of disconnected youth.

At the event, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav announced that beginning in July, OBT would be awarded a Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) contract to work with youth in Jamaica, through Y Roads. This support will greatly enhance the portfolio of services being provided out of the center. Also in attendance to celebrate the event were New York City Council Deputy Majority Leader Leroy Comrie and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall. Following the opening of this inaugural branch—located at 161-04 Jamaica Ave—the Y plans to open two more locations before the end of 2014 in underserved neighborhoods.



New York Life Foundation Provides Multi-Year Support for Y Roads

OBT announces a two year, \$300,000 grant from the New York Life Foundation to support the launch of the Y Roads Center in Jamaica, Queens.

"We are pleased to help disadvantaged youth become self-sufficient by investing in an innovative and strategic partnership," said Marlyn Torres, Senior Program Officer of the New York Life Foundation. "By combining the YMCA's strength as a service provider for disengaged youth with Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow's proven expertise in academic support, job training and placement, the Y Roads Center gives Queens' youth a second chance at life and hope for their futures."

"The most innovative aspect of the Y Roads model is that two very strong youth organizations are coming together to address the crisis of disconnected youth in NYC"

Randy Peers, Executive Director - Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

"The Y takes very seriously its mission of youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Nowhere do those issues come together in more profound ways than addressing the challenge of nearly a quarter million disconnected youth."

Jack Lund, President and CEO - YMCA of Greater New York

Thank you to the following foundations for their support of Y Roads:

New York Life Foundation
The Clark Foundation
The Pinkerton Foundation
Tiger Foundation
The Heckscher Foundation for Children
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
JPMorgan Chase Foundation
Ira W. DeCamp Foundation

Happenings *Around* OBT

OBT Welcomes New Staff



Career Day

4/13



YAIP Graduation

6/13



ONA Students Field Trip

6/13



Governor Cuomo's State of the Budget Address

2/13



Goldman Sachs Speed Networking

5/13



Kevin Guscott

Y Roads Program Director

Kevin Guscott is the Program Director at the new Jamaica Y Roads Center. Mr. Guscott joined OBT in 2010 as a Youth Coordinator for the Young Adult Internship Program. Prior to joining OBT, Mr. Guscott worked in various capacities in government, non-profit, development planning, and has managed election campaigns and business ventures in the Caribbean. Currently, Mr. Guscott is the Vice President of the Jamaica National Movement and works with a network of CBOs active in promoting Caribbean culture, sports and academic development. Mr. Guscott is excited to bring his skills and experience to improving the educational and employment opportunities for disconnected youth in Jamaica, Queens.



Maria Cruz

Program Associate



Angel Gonzalez

Program Associate



Analeida Serrano

Program Associate



Stephanie Ramos

Program Associate



Eudene Neverson

Youth Coordinator



Dashun Duran

Youth Coordinator



Haxhire Redzovic

Keyboarding/
Office Procedures
Instructor



Junior Johnson

Math Instructor



Randolph Archbald

Office Procedures/
Computer
Instructor

Bloomberg Administration Recognizes OBT

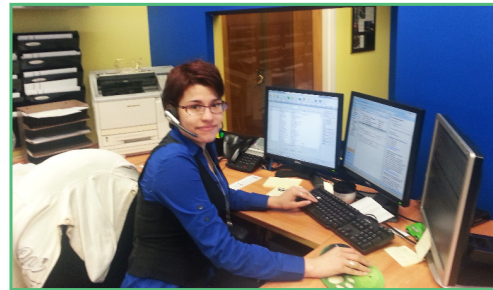
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the New York City Economic Development Corporation announced the creation of the new LINK (Leveraging Innovations and our Neighborhoods in the Knowledge Economy) initiatives at OBT's Bushwick location in March 2013. OBT, in partnership with The LAMP (Learning About Multimedia Project), created the Digital Career Path Program as one of these initiatives that seeks to increase students' computer literacy and digital skills while participating in an innovative "earn while you learn" training model.

The Center for Economic Opportunity and Mayor Bloomberg recognized OBT as one of NYC's ten most innovative non-profits in the first ever NYC Nonprofit Innovation Awards. OBT earned this recognition for pioneering its Applied Learning modules that provide disconnected youth with innovative opportunities that include Public Speaking, Speed Networking, and Service Learning, while fostering partnerships with employers and corporate volunteers. The prestigious ceremony was held at Gracie Mansion in May 2013.

Spotlight on Success - Sappheira Soria

When Sappheira Soria (age 20) came to OBT, she was facing numerous challenges. She had just escaped from an abusive household and was forced to postpone her college and career goals while struggling to support herself as a young adult. Sappheira took a job as a waitress in Soho, only to find herself unexpectedly unemployed after Hurricane Sandy decimated the restaurant. After hearing about OBT from a friend, she decided to speak to Corporate Recruiter Teresita Hurtado. "She came to me looking for just a job, but she had so much potential and real dreams of going to college," recalled Ms. Hurtado. "I encouraged her to enroll in our Youth Job and Education Training program to gain skills that could help build her career and afford her the opportunity to go to college."

Sappheira quickly achieved her Microsoft Office Specialist Certification, National Retail Federation Foundation Professional Certification in Customer Service, and National Work Readiness Credential, outpacing most of the students in her class. "When I came to OBT, it was the lowest point in my life. I felt like I was constantly drowning. My counselors and teachers, however, were there to support me and helped me to move past the problems that were holding me back."



With new skills and credentials, Sappheira interviewed at Brightstone Insurance Services in New Rochelle and started as

a Receptionist in May. "I finally feel optimistic about my future. I love my new job and I am constantly learning new skills," Sappheira said. In just over a month, she has increased her responsibilities and is both engaging in customer service relations as well as issuing certificates of insurance. Her hard work and dedication to the company has not gone unnoticed. Amy King, the Director of Operations at Brightstone, said, "Sappheira has a difficult position to fill. Receptionist roles today have evolved to include many different functions, and she came to us with all the right qualifications. We like to promote from within the company, and I see her as a prospective candidate for growth at Brightstone Insurance Services."

Sappheira is still pursuing her dream of going to college and was accepted to City Tech for the Fall of 2013. Unfortunately, she, like many young adults, is having trouble financing her education. She remains optimistic stating, "Even if I have to put it on hold for now, I know that I am on the right path and my goals are within reach."

OBT Launches the GED Campaign to Finish Program

The Fund for Public Advocacy, together with OBT and partners from across the city, launched the 2013 GED Campaign to Finish, designed to encourage the city's young adults to complete the General Educational Development (GED) test before the significant changes occur in January 2014. Beginning January 2014, New York State will implement a revised exam for high school equivalency that will invalidate individual section

scores earned through the existing five-part GED and require anyone who has passed even four segments of the current five-part GED process to start the exam over. This summer, OBT launched four GED Campaign to Finish accelerated classes for "near passers" in its Sunset Park, Bushwick, and Jamaica locations and will provide additional classes throughout the fall. This free eight week program provides tailored instruction to help individuals pass the exam before 2014. Upon completion of the program, OBT provides connections to opportunities for job training, job placement, and college access.



Fund for Public Advocacy Executive Director Paula Gavin said, "We are very proud to partner with Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow in this campaign and we celebrate the excellence, commitment and spirit of the OBT family of young adults, staff and volunteers."

Individuals interested in participating in the program or volunteering should contact Katherine Aspell for more information at 718-387-1600.





Summer ²⁰/₁₃ Soirée



June 4, 2013 marked the culmination of a truly historic year for OBT as it celebrated its 30th Anniversary and the recent expansion into Jamaica, Queens at its Second Annual Summer Soirée. The event raised a record \$85,000 in funds that will contribute to our mission of helping build careers through confidence, discipline, and professionalism.

Two individuals who have advanced employment and educational outcomes for young adults throughout their careers were honored: OBT's Chair Emeritus, Frank Morizio, Jr. received the Sister Mary Youth Builder Award and YMCA President and CEO Jack Lund received the OBT Leadership Award. Duke Castiglione, Fox 5 sports anchor, and film and TV Actress Annabella Sciorra presided over the

exciting evening in the beautiful Battery Gardens. Guests enjoyed dinner and cocktails overlooking majestic views of the NYC Harbor and the Statue of Liberty. 501 Auctions provided technology for our online silent auction.

"I am deeply honored not just to be recognized by Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, but for the Y to be able to work alongside such a well-regarded like-minded organization," said Jack Lund, President & CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York.

OBT's Chair Emeritus, Frank Morizio, recalled, "30 years ago Sister Mary's vision of providing opportunities to young adults through education and job training was seen as impossible. Today, we are still working to turn those impossible dreams into a reality for thousands of young adults."

OBT trainee Angelica Centeno courageously shared her story of academic and professional success despite suffering through a domestic abuse relationship in high school. Ultimately, she found the courage to leave her relationship but had to also leave school to work and support her family. "I worked so hard to help my mother but I knew that's not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life and then I was told about OBT," she recalled. Angelica received her GED, Microsoft Office Specialist Certification (MOS), National Retail Federation Foundation Professional Certification in Customer Service (NRF), was captain of the Sunset Park debate team, and was hired at Connors and Sullivan Law Firm as an Office Clerk. "My fellow classmates and the staff at OBT helped me gain confidence and realize that I have the ability to pursue all of my dreams."

Summer ²⁰/₁₃ Soirée Sponsors

YMCA of Greater New York	Industry City
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United Healthcare	Skody Scot & Co.
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OBT Board of Directors	

Thank you!

Opportunities For a Better Tomorrow

Randolph Peers, *Executive Director*

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Y ROADS CENTER

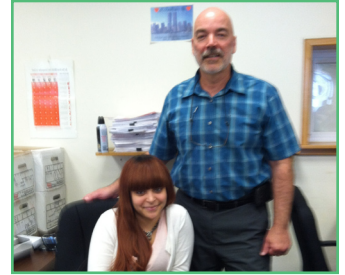
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Employer Spotlight

William Hird & Co., Inc. and FireServ have been industry leaders in fire protection products and services since 1953 servicing New York City and nationwide retailers. OBT started its relationship with the two companies when Tom Bury, their owner and partner, determined that the candidates he was receiving from staffing agencies were not meeting the high-quality standards his companies had established. As a result, he decided to try local hiring after hearing about OBT's young adult job training program in Sunset Park. He was pleased with the results and in the past five years has hired many candidates from OBT's youth and adult programs for various positions ranging from office clerks to accounting and finance operations. Mr. Bury stated, "To date, we have had a wonderful working experience with OBT, and we look forward to expanding our relationship as our business continues to grow." He also noted that OBT's participants are

"articulate, possess a wide range of skills, and have the right experience in customer service that we are looking for."



One of William Hird & Co., Inc.'s most recent OBT hires, Daniel Harris, said she was originally nervous about starting her first job but confident in the skills she acquired in OBT's job training program. She added, "I feel fortunate that Ms. Hurtado pushed me to interview here because in only four months on the job I have already learned so much." Daniel joins four other former OBT alumni at the shared offices of William Hird & Co., Inc. and FireServ, some of whom have maintained their employment with the company for several years, adding tremendous value to the company through their experience.

To learn more about William Hird & Co. Inc
visit www.hirdco.com



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