

# Lines of Opportunity

PUBLISHED BY: **OB**T OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Fall 2016

## INSIDE THIS EDITION



Innovation Lab @ Industry City Now Open



OBT's Office of New Americans gets accredited



Meet our Junior Leadership Board

## BETWEEN THE LINES



**Randy Peers**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Young Adult Lives Matter! Do I have your attention? It seems like every other day we read a new story about young people of color facing tragic consequences -- sometimes at the hands of police, and many times at the hands of other young people from their community. Countless numbers of the young adults in our programs have experienced violence in their lives. Many have had either direct or indirect contact with gangs. Most have experienced some sort of trauma and almost none have sought help coping.

These tragedies make the work that we do at OBT challenging. Yet this is the backdrop under which the talented and caring staff at OBT work -- empowering young adults through education, job training, and employment. We encourage our young adults to work hard and play by the rules, regardless of challenges they may be facing in their lives.

Unfortunately, when our young people see too many examples of police brutality or hear political rhetoric that stereotypes immigrants and other non-white groups as a drain on American society, it makes it much harder to deliver the positive messages that make up the foundation of OBT's mission. It's imperative to highlight positive examples to counter much of the negativity our youth experience, which can lead to discouragement and disenchantment.

Speed networking events with professionals from major financial corporations help OBT youth meet and learn from people they normally would not be exposed to. Many of these professionals are successful people of color who have been through similar experiences in their lives and have overcome many challenges on their road to success. Service learning projects expose OBT youth to the value of "giving back" through some type of community service -- serving Thanksgiving Dinner at a Senior Center, wrapping holiday gifts at a homeless shelter, or mulching in Prospect Park. These types of activities are examples of how young people can contribute to solutions in their community. OBT youth also positively engage with local law enforcement -- actively participating in many of the "National Night Out" events around NYC, getting placed in jobs and internships at the Brooklyn District Attorney's office, and hearing presentations from community affairs officers of the NYPD as part of their life skills classes.

Given all the negativity and trauma our youth are exposed to, in the end, OBT refuses to let our young people be defined these issues. The youth themselves refuse to be defined by negativity, and it is their tremendous resilience that paves the way for success!

# INNOVATION LAB @ INDUSTRY CITY

The Innovation Lab is a new kind of community center, recently opened in Sunset Park, where locals can build 21st century job skills and find employment. Located in Industry City, the state-of-the-art space is where Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow is teaching the city's next generation of coders to build websites and apps in its Website Design and Coding Program. Participants, ages 17-24, learn coding fundamentals of numerous languages including HTML, JavaScript, and CSS and have the opportunity to earn their Adobe Specialist Certification in Photoshop. Miguel Pacheco, Program Director said, "The program is an incredible opportunity for young adults to learn the building blocks that make up a variety of coding languages that will allow them to take advantage of advanced training opportunities, college, or find employment in the innovation economy."



**Innovation Lab ribbon cutting ceremony**



CEO of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Randy Peers said, "The Innovation Lab is a tremendous resource for our trainees to learn the latest in web and coding technology amid companies and manufacturers who are leaders in the industry. The Innovation Lab is also a huge benefit to Sunset Park residents who now have a direct line to high-paying job opportunities at Industry City."

Cristal Rivera, Director of Community Engagement at Industry City applauded the partnership between Industry City and OBT and said, "OBT is playing a pivotal role in the Innovation Lab by offering technology and digital training to local youth allowing them to connect to the growing innovation economy jobs at Industry City. We look forward to growing this program at Industry City in partnership with our tenants and the community!"

## FOUNDATION AND CORPORATE SUPPORT FY 2016

- The Achelis Foundation
- The Barker Welfare Foundation
- The Booth Ferris Foundation
- The Clark Foundation
- The Tiger Foundation
- The Pinkerton Foundation
- The Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund
- The Bernard F. and Alva B. Gimbel Foundation
- The Lafferty Family Charitable Foundation
- The Morgan Stanley Foundation
- The MUFG Foundation
- Deutsche Bank
- The Hearst Foundations
- The Robin Hood Foundation
- The Marketing Research Education Foundation
- RTS Family Foundation
- The PIMCO Foundation
- TD Charitable Foundation
- Santander Bank, N.A.
- Con Edison
- The O'Shea Family Foundation
- Popular Community Bank Foundation
- Investors Bank
- Goldman Sachs
- The Heckscher Foundation for Children

Your support is instrumental in enabling us to carry out our mission. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to serve 4,500 people last year through education, job training, ESOL, and support services. Please know that your investment today in the lives of our participants produces an average return of over half a million dollars in wages over the course of each trainee's working life.

**To donate to OBT  
Visit [www.obtjobs.org/donate](http://www.obtjobs.org/donate)**

# OBT IMMIGRATION SERVICES BECOMES ACCREDITED!

OBT's Office of New Americans located at the Bushwick Workforce Resource Center has helped hundreds of immigrants in Brooklyn and the surrounding boroughs become citizens, renew their green cards, and apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) since its opening in 2012. In 2015 alone, OBT sent 199 naturalization applications, 165 were sent to USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) with fee waivers, and assisted a total of 492 individuals in better understanding their immigration options through consultations and assistance in obtaining necessary immigration records. In October, OBT's immigration services team became accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals to provide legal consultations, complete immigration forms, and represent clients before USCIS at interviews. This accreditation is especially needed in the community as OBT is the only BIA recognized organization to serve the Bushwick and Ridgewood communities.

To add to this success, the Anchoring Achievement in Mexican Communities initiative (the other half of OBT's immigrant services team), has also been on a roll recently due to its partnership with the Mexican Consulate. In February of this year AAMC hosted the Consulate on Wheels, which came to Bushwick and provided services to hundreds of Mexican nationals, granting 337 consular documents including passports, birth certificates, and national identification in just four days! AAMC continues to serve the Mexican youth and parents of the community through various engagement initiatives, such as college access services, after-school programming, and immigration services in collaboration with ONA.

Laura Garbes, Coordinator for the Anchoring Achievement in Mexican Communities program said, "For the past three years, OBT's AAMC program has dedicated itself to providing immigration services, financial literacy education, and college access programming to our Mexican community through this program. Thanks to the Mexican Consulate on Wheels, this work expanded to bringing necessary consular services right into the Bushwick neighborhood. For one week, we were able to work with the Mexican Consulate to provide Mexican Brooklynites consular identification cards, birth certificates, and passports."

Alyssa Bain, Manager for OBT's Office of New Americans said, "Both initiatives have put OBT on the map in a way that is completely new to OBT's history of youth programs, yet they are vital to the youth that OBT serves in a city where 22% of the population is foreign-born. Many OBT participants are non-citizens or first generation Americans whose parents

were born on foreign soil, and so they stand to benefit from the array of services OBT is offering through its immigrant services. It is with great excitement that OBT continues its work in this area, where it hopes to be able to expand its offerings to include a wider array of immigration services in a community whose needs are ever-changing."



**Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez visits the Bushwick Workforce Resource Center**

## STARBUCKS PARTNERSHIP



There are thousands of Starbucks throughout the country, but none are quite like the one recently opened in Jamaica, Queens through a partnership with OBT's Y Roads and Starbucks. This first-of-its-kind location has a dedicated in-store community training space. Young adults who are enrolled in the Youth Education and Job Training Program at Y Roads Jamaica will receive customer service and retail skills training and the opportunity to earn their OSHA certification and also their advanced Customer Service Certification from the National Retail Federation. Additionally, participants will learn how to operate all of Starbucks' equipment. Those who successfully complete the program will have the opportunity to work at Starbucks locations across the city! The next time you get your coffee, it could be made by a Y Roads trainee!

# MEET OUR JUNIOR LEADERSHIP BOARD

By **Sasha Urquidi**, Junior Leadership Board Chair

The Junior Leadership Board (JLB) was proposed and created by Board members Tamara Dews and Allie Abbott almost three years ago as a way to raise awareness and create an avenue for young professionals to volunteer and give back to OBT. The group has grown from three initial members to a total of fourteen young professionals, including an OBT alumni. There is quite a bit of diversity amongst the group in terms of industry and background -- members work in range from finance to electronics recycling.



Given that the JLB was started not so long ago, the group is very entrepreneurial in nature as the members have the freedom to create their own paths and give back in whatever way is most meaningful to them. The JLB is focused on creating awareness through various events including the annual "mixer" they have hosted for the past couple of years. There is also a great focus on engaging directly with OBT students and providing a level of mentorship. The JLB members will start consistently attending

OBT's Stay At Work events this month. Additionally, the JLB has created a recurring speed networking program at MUFG for OBT students to learn the basics of networking, personal finance and have an opportunity to develop professional relationships with MUFG employees. The JLB is also focused on creating programming to grow and maintain the OBT alumni network. The team is very excited to engage in these new initiatives.

**The Junior Leadership Board is hosting their annual social mixer this September! All proceeds benefit OBT. To buy tickets visit <http://obtjobs.org/events/fourth-annual-social-mixer/>**

- Sasha Urquidi, Board Chair**  
*Goldman Sachs*
- Justin Collins**  
*Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation*
- Leticia Ferreras**  
*MUFG Union Bank*
- Lindsay Fox**  
*J.P. Morgan*
- Julio Gomez**  
*Marsh*
- Marc Gross**  
*Condon & Forsyth LLP*
- William Jimenez Jr**  
*MUFG in the Americas*
- Lauren Manchester**  
*Goldman Sachs*
- Yaritza Muniz**  
*Sirius XM Radio*
- Laura Noorani**  
*Goldman Sachs*
- Eadaoin Quinn**  
*Sims Municipal Recycling*
- Darrell Scott**  
*PIMCO*
- Ariel Solomon**  
*Bridgewater Associates*

## 2016 Fall Gala — & — Opportunity for Youth Awards



**Save the Date**

Tuesday, October 18th, 2016

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Tribeca Rooftop

2016 Gala Honoree, Kathryn Wylde  
President and CEO, Partnership for New York City

To purchase tickets or for more information  
[www.obtjobs.org/gala2016](http://www.obtjobs.org/gala2016) | [events@obtjobs.org](mailto:events@obtjobs.org) | 718-369-0303

# OBT WELCOMES NEW STAFF



**Jason Rodriguez**  
*Director, Out-of-School Youth Programs*

Jason brings strong experience in program management, strategic planning, and performance improvement for both OSY and YAIP programs, most recently serving as the assistant youth programs manager at the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation.



**Yanni Deconescu**  
*Manager, Curriculum Design & Teacher Development*

Yanni Deconescu joined OBT as the agency's new Manager of Curriculum Design & Teacher Development. He holds a master's degree in industrial & labor relations from Cornell University, and a B.S. in business management & economics from SUNY Empire State College.



**Alexandra Sanchez**  
*Director, College Access*

Alexandra holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Connecticut and a Master in Public Health at NYU. Before joining OBT, she worked as a community organizer in San Diego and most recently served as an education specialist for high school and college bound students in foster care.



**Rebekah Cross**  
*Development Manager*

Rebekah Cross has joined OBT as the development & fundraising manager. In her role she will handle grant renewal for OBT and MCIF and the cultivation and stewardship of our growing individual donor base. Rebekah is a graduate of Fairmont State University in Fairmont, WV.



**Jackie Ordonez**  
*Director, OBT Programs, Y Roads Jamaica*

Jacqueline Ordoñez joins the team as the Director of OBT Programs, Y-Roads Jamaica. She has over eight years of experience working in New York City organizations that specialize in youth and community development, where she served in both instructional and program management capacities.



**Sara Vonhold**  
*Director, Young Adult Internship Program Plus*

Sara Vonhold holds a M.S. in social work from Columbia University and a B.A. in psychology and human development from SUNY Geneseo. Over the past several years, Sara has launched and managed programming in NYC public high schools and other nonprofit organizations designed to empower young adults' educational and career success.

## Happenings around OBT



OBT Trainees Recording for Story Corps



OBT Recieving a Resolution from State Senator Kevin Parker



Young Men's Empowerment Day with Jumaane Williams



The Campus Opening in Brownsville NYCHA Houses with Sen Jesse Hamilton



Adult Literacy Rally at City Hall

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## SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS



One of OBT's fantastic employers, Doctors on Call, is a Brooklyn-based business that has been providing medical house calls to elderly and homebound patients throughout NYC's metro area since 1968. Marisol Mendoza, a graduate of OBT's Youth Education and Job Training Program, has served as a receptionist where she answers calls, manages schedules, verifies insurance, and orders medical supplies for patients.

In 2013, Marisol enrolled in OBT to build clerical skills she needed for a higher paying job. After receiving customer service and Microsoft Word certifications, she was hired by Doctors on Call and enrolled in college part-time. She continues to be one of their best employees and is pursuing her Bachelor's Degree part time in Elementary Education at Brooklyn College.

Her Office Supervisor, Joshua Maldonado, said "OBT is a great program that prepares individuals for work. Over the years

Doctors on Call has hired several candidates who are professional and very hard-working such as Marisol Mendoza. Since being hired, Marisol has been the example to follow. Our experience with OBT has been exceptional. The job developers are always willing and responsive."

Marisol said, "I love working at Doctors on Call, everyone is so helpful and if you show you're a good worker and care about what you do, there are so many opportunities. When I started working there, I had no work experience but after several months of seeing my work ethic, they gave me new responsibilities!"



*Building careers through confidence,  
discipline, and professionalism*

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