

Lines of Opportunity

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SPRING—SUMMER 2007

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OBT's First Annual Gala**

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INSIDE THE LINES



Randy Peers
Executive Director

I can't believe it's been a year since I began my tenure as executive director of OBT. Much has happened in this first year, and I am very excited about our prospects for the future.

Since I arrived, OBT has secured over \$200,000 in new funding, including grants from The Heckscher Foundation for Children and the William T. Grant Foundation. Neither of these organizations had funded OBT programs before, and we are excited that they both chose OBT through a competitive funding process.

The Heckscher grant enabled us to launch a *Public Speaking and Communications* module within our existing business skills curriculum for youth. The William T. Grant Foundation's support will be going toward continuing our outcomes-based lesson planning project with our teaching staff. This staff development project is being conducted in partnership with the Workforce Professionals Training Institute.

I am pleased to announce that in March, we launched adult literacy and ESOL classes for the first time at our Bushwick/Bed-Stuy location thanks to some new funding from the NYS Education Department. (See story on page 4). We also have a new organizational logo and image thanks to a grant from the Lafferty Family Charitable Foundation. (See story on page 3).

Lastly, I am particularly proud of OBT's First Annual Gala which was held on March 22nd, at the Historic Grand Prospect Hall. The event clearly demonstrated that OBT has a great base of supporters who came out to honor the legacy of Sr. Mary Franciscus, OBT's founder and inspirational leader who passed away in 2005. Her spirit lives on in the work that we do each day.

In closing, I want to extend my sincerest thanks to the staff and the Board of Directors for their continuing hard work and support. While we have undergone many changes, the high quality services and the dedication to our clients remain steadfast and uncompromising.



From left, Kathy Wyde, President, Partnership for NYC and honorees Wendy Z. Goldstein, Lutheran HealthCare and Dr. Regina Peruggi, Kingsborough Community College

Over 200 Guests Join Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow in “Celebrating Sister Mary’s Legacy”



Staff of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce



Randy and Frank with Honorees Wendy Goldstein and Dr. Regina Peruggi



Randy and Margaret, OBT Gala Event Coordinator



Randy Peers with State Senator Velmanette Montgomery



Pat Ruiz from Lutheran HealthCare and Eileen Holmes from Commerce Bank



Phillicia Brantly and Latoya Duggan - OBT Trainees

On Thursday, March 22nd, over 200 community, business, and political leaders joined Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) at the Grand Prospect Hall to celebrate the organization’s first Annual Gala. The event honored the memory of Sister Mary Francis, OBT’s beloved founder who passed away in July of 2005.

OBT, which was founded in 1983 in the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn, is one of NYC’s leading youth job training organizations. OBT’s program works with young adults, ages 17-21, providing them with GED classes and business skills training that prepare them for clerical jobs in professional firms. In 2001, OBT opened a second location in the Bushwick/Bed-Stuy area. In 2006, Randolph Peers, formally Vice President at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, was selected as the organization’s new Executive Director. Since its founding, the organization has helped over 4,000 youth and over 800 adults achieve employment and self-sufficiency.

Gala honorees included Wendy Z. Goldstein, President and CEO of Lutheran HealthCare and Dr. Regina S. Peruggi, President of Kingsborough Community College, for their commitment to building strong communities through education and service.

OBT also awarded Dolores Abbruscato, with the first ever Sister Mary Youth Builder Award, an award dedicated in memory of Sister Mary to individuals who dedicate their professional lives to educating youth.

“Dolores, along with Sister Mary, founded OBT back when many youth in Sunset Park were dropping out of school and joining gangs,” said Frank Morizio Jr., Chairperson of OBT. “She has spent the last twenty-four years of her life building a great organization that has helped countless young people to improve their lives. We greatly appreciate her dedication and commitment.”

Carmen Cruz, an alumnus of OBT, shared with the audience how OBT and Sister Mary personally touched her life. “I received life changing blessings the day I walked through the doors of OBT.” “Today I am a successful professional and a proud mother of four who proved that the program can uplift people and help them to get ahead,” she said.

OBT was recognized at the event by the office of the Brooklyn Borough President, Marty Markowitz and State Senator Velmanette Montgomery. Also in attendance were Kathryn S. Wylde, President and CEO of the Partnership for New York City, and representatives for Councilwoman Sara M. Gonzalez and Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez. The event’s sponsors included Lutheran HealthCare, Commerce Bank, TMI Trading Corporation, Sims/Hugo Neu, Forest City Ratner, Con Edison, Keyspan, Kingsborough Community College, De La Cour & Ferrara, Signature Construction and Pilo Arts.

“There are no words powerful enough to describe the void Sister Mary left,” said Randolph Peers. “Our comfort is in knowing that her legacy will



The Grand Ballroom

live on in the thousands of lives she touched and the thousands more we will continue to touch through the program she started 23 years ago.”



From left, Tom Edwards, Chair, Lutheran HealthCare, with Carmen Cruz, OBT Alumnus and Staff from Lutheran.



Randy and Frank with Dolores recipient of the First Youth Builder Award



State Senator Velmanette Montgomery with Gala Honorees.



Claudia Alvarez from Sims|Hugo Neu and Msgr. Faustino Cordero.



Joseph Longobardi and his wife Loretta Longobardi



Dani Casso, William Ortiz and Debbie Roman - OBT Staff

OBT Gets a Makeover



Thanks to a grant from the Lafferty Family Charitable Foundation, OBT was able to engage in a brand identity development initiative that resulted in a new organizational image and will ultimately set the foundation for redesigning our website.

In September of last year, OBT contracted with Levinson Block, LLC, a well respected NYC-based design firm that specializes in marketing communication for non profits, to undertake this project.

With over 20-years of experience, Levinson Block conducted an in-depth strategic brand analysis by interviewing various stakeholders connected to OBT and its history. Such stakeholders included board members, staff, past and present clients, funders, and business and community leaders.

The results of the analysis set the foundation for designing a new logo, color scheme, tag line and overall image that will translate into new stationery, business cards, and website.



"I am extremely pleased with our new look," said Randy Peers, Executive Director. "I think our new logo and tag line appropriately balance a modern image with a clear message of opportunity and advancement for our clients."

With the new logo and image in place, OBT will be working on redesigning the website over the summer.

Visit www.levinsonblock.com for information on Levinson Block LLP.

Did you know!

Since 1983 OBT has served 5,000 young people and over 1,100 adults!

Students' Awards and Recognition Night

Students from Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) were recognized at the Offsite Educational Services (OES) Students Awards and Recognition Night celebrated on Tuesday, May 15 at Lower East Side Prep School.

At the event, OBT's students were recognized for Academic Improvement and Leadership.

Academic Improvement

Taylor Barchuk
John Bermudez
Vincent DeFrancesco
Jonathan Gonzalez
Ismael Mones
Michael Nazario
Shamyka Sanford



Leadership:

Phillicia Brantley
Latoya Duggan
Samantha Jawahir
Michee Jules
Nicole Rodriguez
Annette Torres

**CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL!!!**

Registration is Now Open

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BETTER TOMORROW
IS NOW REGISTERING FOR THE
SEPTEMBER 2007 CYCLE**



Registration dates are as follow:

- June 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 25, 27, 29
- July and August Monday - Friday

**9:30 am - 11:30 am
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm**

Family Orientation nights:

August 1, 2007 at 6:30 pm
August 22, 2007 at 6:30 pm

For more information please call:

Sunset Park Office
718-369-0303

Bushwick Office
718-387-1600

New Programs

Public Speaking and Communications Component for Youth



Collette Ellis - Principal
InStep Consulting, LLC

Hear ye, hear ye! Trainees from Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) will speak their minds on issues ranging from mandatory drug testing to human cloning at a public debate on Wednesday, June 20, 2007 at the Brooklyn Marriott. How will they be prepared to participate in such an event? These trainees have been coached and advised via a new component of the OBT job-training program – a *Public Speaking & Communication Skills* (PSC) course – launched in April of this year.

Supported by The Heckscher Foundation for Children and The Clark Foundation, OBT engaged InStep Consulting LLC to develop an interactive training curriculum with custom activities tailored for the youth. With the goal of reviewing the essentials of public speaking, concentrated areas of study included: The art of persuasion, Techniques for effective speech writing, Professional organization and outlining, and Debate techniques

OBT hopes that the PSC course will enable current and future trainees to present themselves professionally and effectively in any public speaking setting. Among other things, it emphasized the importance of body language and reinforced their confidence to support the trainees' overall growth and professional development. OBT managers and job developers hope the course will equip trainees with skills to resolve on-the-job disputes by organizing their thoughts and preparing a course of action when presenting their opinions to a co-worker or supervisor.

The PSC course will conclude with a half-day *Debate & Public Speaking* event at the Brooklyn Marriott, during which trainees will demonstrate the skills they have acquired in the course. In addition to delivering persuasive speeches on a wide variety of topics, including US immigration policies and the war in Iraq, trainees from the Bushwick and Sunset Park locations will engage in a competitive mock trial debate.

According to Randy Peers, OBT Executive Director, *"we believe that PSC training will provide our trainees with more leverage as they job search in a competitive market, and provide them with more opportunities to advance professionally in the future."*

InStep Consulting LLC is a socially conscious training and organizational development firm that maintains headquarters in New York City. The firm has provided Management and Employee Training to retained clients since 1998. InStep focuses on both the individual contributor – assessing strengths and opportunities for growth – and the organization – aligning resources with strategic goals.

Adult Literacy: Evening Classes at Bushwick Office



Claude Prevost
Program Coordinator

Through the awarding of a State Education Department (SED) grant, the new program primarily helps meet the educational needs of the underserved Brooklyn communities of Bushwick and Bedford-Stuyvesant although students come from other communities as well.

in January, OBT was able to launch a new Adult Literacy initiative at Bushwick. Five new free afternoon and evening programs started in March.

The new adult classes include a GED preparation class and a Pre-GED class, the latter intended for those needing more work on basic skills before moving to the GED level.

There are, also, 3 new adult ESOL classes, which together cover the beginning to advanced ESOL levels.

Program staff includes 2 P/T ESOL teachers, 1 GED/Pre-GED teacher who also serves as Coordinator, a P/T Enrichment teacher and one P/T Administrative Assistant.

Community response has, so far, been tremendous! We have already surpassed our goal of enrolling 135 students.

OBT looks forward to continuing to meet the need for convenient and accessible Adult Literacy classes out of its Bushwick site well into the future!

For more information or registration dates please call 718-387-1600.



Program Staff from left, Leonor Padovani, Julio Londono, and Prathima Chrisdas.

Visit us online:
www.obtjobs.org

The programs of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow are supported by the following government agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals:

The Bodman Foundation
The Clark Foundation
The Frances L. & Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund
DeLaCour Family Foundation
Dyer Contracting
Bernard F. & Alva B. Gimbel Foundation
Heibold Foundation
Robin Hood Foundation
Lafferty Family Charitable Foundation
MetLife Foundation

Physicians Reciprocal Insurers
The Pinkerton Foundation
The RTS Foundation
Helena Rubinstein Foundation
The Heckscher Foundation for Children
Sisters of Mercy
The Spiritus Gladius Foundation
The Starr Foundation
Tiger Foundation
NY Mercantile
Consolidated Edison
IKEA Property, Inc.

Lutheran HealthCare
Kingsborough Community College
Forest City Ratner
Commerce Bank
KeySpan
Sims|Hugo Neu
Signature Construction
TMI Trading
Pilo Arts

New York City Councilmember Sara M. Gonzalez
City of New York: Department of Youth and Community Development
Department of Small Business Services
State Senator Velmanette Montgomery
State Assembly Member Felix Ortiz

Students visit Hospital Pharmacies

The Pharmacy Technician Training program provided at OBT is entering the fourth consecutive year serving the Brooklyn communities.



It has evolved from a 12-week to an 18-week program, maximizing the amount of time to prepare them for the National Certification Exam provided by the PTCB.

In September 2006, both OBT locations got the opportunity to see first hand how a

hospital Pharmacy functions.

The students from the Sunset Park location went to visit Lutheran Medical Center and its Pharmacy Department Director, Mr. Steve DiCrescento. Wendy Goldstein, president of Lutheran Health-Care and staff from the human resource department welcomed the students and gave them an opportunity to understand the working environment at a hospital pharmacy.

Woodhull Hospital, near our Bushwick / Bed-Stuy location, provided



the opportunity for the students to experience and learn the duties of Pharmacy Technicians. Mrs.

Sheila Neiman, hosted a tour around the facilities and the staff members from Woodhull provided the students with feedback of the benefits of working in the field.



Did you know!
OBT provides ESL, GED, and Computer classes for adults at both locations.
Call for more information.

OBT Welcomes New Staff



Claude Prevost
Adult Education
Coordinator

Claude completed his secondary and post secondary education in Canada where he received a Diploma of Collegial Studies in Social Sciences, a BA in Humanities and a Masters level degree in Education. He put himself through college by teaching in English as a Second Language (ESL) schools during the summer and tutoring high school students during the school year. He first worked with adults, as a Teacher's Assistant in an adult education program. After college, he worked as an elementary school teacher, a high school teacher and a teacher-librarian in Canada. In 2001, he moved to New York City and began working exclusively with an adult population as Case Manager and a Vocational Trainer. In 2006 he returned to teaching ESL to adults at the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation and GED preparation classes at OBT Bushwick site.



Dani Casso
Counselor
OBT North

Dani came to OBT after teaching Adult Basic Education with Goodwill Industries BEGIN program. Prior to relocating back to New York Dani was a Special Education Teacher at a high school in South Central Los Angeles California and also worked as a behavioral therapist with children diagnosed with autism. Dani's educational background also spans both sides of the country. Dani began her undergraduate education as a psychology major at New York University and later received her Bachelors in Psychology at California State University Northridge. Dani is currently enrolled in a combined Masters/PhD program in Clinical Psychology at The New School University in New York City.



Annabel Fernandez
Administrative
Assistant

Annabel graduated from New Utrecht High School and soon after attended Wood Tobe-Coburn School for "Fashion Merchandising, Marketing and Management". One Year later came to Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow leaving the program with a position as a Customer Call Representative (CCR) at NYC 311. Currently Annabel is the Administrative Assistant at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow Sunset Park, and also looking to go back to college and pursue her career in the fashion industry.



Emily May
Special Projects
Coordinator

Emily has worked to find and implement community-based solutions to poverty since her graduation from New York University in 2002. Prior to being named Special Projects Coordinator at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Emily was the Director of Development at the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation. Emily also worked as Political Action Coordinator at the New York City Employment and Training Coalition, where she advocated on behalf of 200 workforce development programs to improve funding and program support. Emily has a Master's Degree in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics.



Judi Smith
Corporate
Recruiter

Judi is a graduate of Ohio University with a B.S in Human Resource Management. She's worked in both the Corporate Private Sector and Non-Profit arenas fully enjoying both. Judi's worked as a Recruiter, Trainer and ultimately Generalist for over 10 years. Her passion and success has always been managing human resources and with a full commitment to strategically meeting the goals and objectives of the organizations and people she works with. Judi recently joined OBT because she is committed to working with this population, and helping them succeed, bringing her years of expertise by keeping up with industry trends, making staffing solutions, while using best practices and competitive marketing strategies.



Shauna Wheatt
Corporate
Recruiter

Before coming to Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow Shauna worked for the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce as a Senior Workforce Specialist with Good Help program, where she developed a relationships with community - based organizations to identify, screen and place qualified employees for their Brooklyn-based companies. Previously Shauna worked as an assistant teacher at Willoughby Waverly Day Care.

Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

Randolph Peers
Executive Director

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www.obtjobs.org

Spotlight on Success: Juana Baez

“Nothing but good things is what we have to say about Juana”, according to Linda Torregiano, Juana’s Supervisor, and Michael Connors, owner and founder of the law firm Connors & Sullivan.

Juana Baez enrolled at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) in February 2000. Then she was a 22 year old high school dropout and single mom struggling to get by working as a sales representative for retail store.

“I wanted something better, not only for myself but for my son”, said Juana, “I heard the program was grueling, hard to get through, and that Sister Mary was one tough woman”.

According to Juana, when she first came to OBT, some days she felt like “walking away”. But her determination for

a better life for herself and her son was having a positive effect on her, helping to mold her to a better person.



Linda Torregiano, Michael Connors and Juana Baez

Linda Torregiano, said that she has been a tremendous asset to the law firm of Connors & Sullivan, where she was placed in July 2000 as a Typist Word Processor. Today she is the Assistant Manager of the department celebrating her seven year anniversary.

“She proved her skills and

maturity from day one”, according to Mr. Connors, “She has done great job during her time at the law firm”.

Connors and Sullivan specializes in assisting senior citizens with elder law, probate and state planning, trusts, wills, Medicaid planning and estate litigation.

With four offices in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens, Connors and Sullivan employs more than 40 people, among them 6 graduates from OBT.

Juana affirms that she not only did develop great work ethics and positive attitude from her time at OBT, but she found strength, maturity, and confidence that had laid dormant inside her.

“I want everyone to know that it isn’t an easy road, but it is well worth it”, Baez concluded.

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