

Lines of Opportunity

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BETWEEN THE LINES



Happy Holidays to all of our OBT friends and supporters! The holidays are a very special time for us at OBT – it is a time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the next. As we recap 2007, we have much to be proud of.

In November, we officially launched our new website, www.obtjobs.org, bringing to a close a branding process that has modernized the public image of OBT. The website itself sets the bar for job training organizations by using “virtual interviews” to market to employers the young adults who have recently completed OBT’s rigorous job training program. Whether you are a person looking for assistance, an OBT alumni looking to reconnect, a business owner looking to hire employees, or a person looking to support a great non-profit organization, our website provides it all.

Sticking with the theme of integrating technology into our programming, we were pleased to hear that IBM donated their state-of-the-art Reading Companion software to support our adult literacy program at Bushwick. Along with this donation came new computers to outfit our lab.

In October, OBT was awarded a new Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) contract from the Department of Youth and Community Development. This new pilot project, funded out of the Mayor’s Center for Economic Opportunity, will enable OBT to provide ninety disconnected young adults with paid internships. These paid internships will enable these youth to start building a meaningful work history.

We were also pleased to learn that the New York Community Trust would provide us with funding to offer Pre-GED services for young adults at our Sunset Park location. These classes will be designed specifically to work with low-level readers who can use intensive basic skills instruction prior to entering our vocational GED program. Such programming is an acknowledgement that many disconnected youth are reading below a sixth grade level. These young adults deserve a chance at success, they just need a bit more time and attention.

Finally, as we look forward to 2008, OBT is well positioned to continue to provide the high quality services to youth while seeking to expand our programs to include more options for adults.

I want to wish all of our friends and supporters a wonderful holiday season and best wishes for 2008!

Randy Peers
Executive Director

OBT's Website Launch Event

On November 15th Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT), one of New York City's leading employment and training organizations, launched its new interactive website. The new site sets the bar for job training organizations by using "virtual interviews" to market disconnected young adults who have recently completed OBT's rigorous job training program to employers.

The employers-only portion of the new website includes trainee's resumes, basic skills, and qualifications alongside the three-minute "virtual interviews." This approach is the first of its kind and gives employers a full snap-shot of the young adults OBT trains. "This new website is going to help employers across New York City streamline the lengthy and sometimes arduous interview process," said Mary Quinones from Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn.

The website is also expected to attract young adults by providing a portal to OBT's recently launched MySpace page. "The MySpace page, although still in its infancy, is proving to be one of the most effective ways to communicate with our trainees, most of whom are disconnected youth from all over Brooklyn," said Shauna Wheatt, an OBT corporate recruiter.

OBT's new website also provides guests an opportunity to explore and learn about the different programs the organization offers including: business skills job training and GED classes for young adults, an internship program for youth, ESOL and literacy classes for adults, and employment services. OBT, which was founded in the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn in 1983, now has a second full-service training center in Bushwick and a satellite employment office in Red Hook.

"This new website provides a great representation of all the good work we do each day, helping people to realize their own potential through education, job training, and employment," said Randolph Peers, OBT's executive director. "Whether you are a person looking for assistance, an OBT alumni looking to reconnect, a business owner looking to hire employees, or a person looking to support a great non-profit organization, our website provides it all."

The official site was presented at a special event that took place at Stage 6 @ Steiner Studios, Brooklyn's state of the art film production studio. The event was sponsored in part by Con Edison. Among the many guests that attended were OBT alumni, supporters, employers, community leaders and elected officials. The site itself was designed by Lost in Brooklyn Studio, a Brooklyn-based graphic design firm headed by Greenwood Heights residents, Aaron Brashear and Mic Holwin.

The appropriateness of hosting the event at Stage 6 was not lost on several guests who mentioned the connection between the virtual interviews and film production. "OBT is clearly a pioneer in using technology to help carry out its mission," remarked one guest.

To view OBT's new website visit www.obtjobs.org. To contact Lost in Brooklyn Studio, go to www.lostinbrooklyn.com.



OBT Staff members that participated at the event.



Carolina Guitierrez and Emily Iglesias OBT Trainees present at the event.



OBT Board Chair Frank Morizio (middle) with Board Member Mary Quiñones, and Staff.



Con Edison sponsored OBT's Website Launch Event on November 15, 2007



Randy Peers, Executive Director of OBT presented the Website to the audience



Stage 6 @ Steiner Studios - a wonderful venue



WPTI Staff members, Dan Salemon, Training and Project Manager and Amy Landesman, Director of Training with Audrey Block from The HOPE Program - Brooklyn.



Ashanti Winn, OBT Trainee and Mr. William Ortiz, Site Administrator OBT Bushwick

A "knock" out Internship Program at OBT



For 24 years, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) has been successfully providing job training to out-of-school youth ages 17 to 24. This fall, OBT launched a new program that will provide businesses across the city with well-trained interns at no cost.

The program, called Opportunity Knocks, is designed to provide the most job-ready young adults with short-term paid internships, job placement and follow-up services. It is part of New York City's *Young Adult Internship Program*, which is administered by the Center for Economic Opportunity and the Department of Youth and Community Development.

"Too often, not having work experience can be a barrier to employment for young adults. Opportunity Knocks will provide a unique mix of experience and training that will help young adults set their ca-

reers in motion," said Randy Peers, Executive Director of OBT.

How it works: Young adults will begin an orientation on October 29 that includes three weeks of unpaid, part-time business skills training. If the young adult is a good fit for the program, they will advance to three additional weeks of paid, intensive business skills training.

"The training includes computer skills, business etiquette, financial literacy, and public speaking", according to Vickie Dawson, Director Opportunity Knocks program. "The program reinforces the written business communication skills, relationship building, critical thinking, research skills, and interviewing techniques that are necessary skills on the job".

Following training, candidates are placed in internships throughout the five boroughs. Four days a week they will gain real work experience at their internship

sites. One day a week they return to Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow for additional training and support. By the end of the 17-week program, participants will have the skills they need to help launch their careers. OBT's service model is unique among youth programs due to its comprehensive scope of training and its emphasis on personal discipline and professionalism. Young adults and employers can apply to participate in this new initiative by calling

1-866-O-KNOCKS (656-6257). Training takes place at **OBT Williamsburg**, located at 25 Thornton Street in Brooklyn. The site is easily accessible via the J, M or G train or the B15, B40, B43, B46 or B57 bus line. Internships may take place in any one of New York City's five boroughs, and our goal will always be to find the perfect fit for both young adults and employers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

OBT Annual Gala 2008



For information:
718-369-0303 x 22
droman@obtjobs.org



Debate Day



December 20, 2007
Brooklyn Marriott

Registration December 2007



Registration starts in December 2007
for the February 2008 Cycle

IBM donates for OBT's Adult Literacy Classes

When learning a new language, the advice is always the same: practice, practice, practice. Now, thanks to IBM, OBT's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students will have the opportunity to practice using a new platform: technology.

Reading Companion is a web-based program that allows students to read in English into a microphone. The innovative technology is programmed to correct pronunciation, based on the number of "points" that the student hits in a word. "In a typical classroom, students speak



one at a time. *Reading Companion* literally allows the entire class to speak at once, giving the students more time to practice." said Prathima Christdas, OBT's ESOL Coordinator. "The students love it!" she added.

To support the new technology, IBM also donated 15 new computers, a projector, a ThinkPad, and headsets. "IBM's *Reading Companion* embodies the spirit of OBT. Through innovation, together IBM and OBT will build a stronger Brook-

lyn," said Randolph Peers, Executive Director.

ESOL Registration for February Cycle starts in January 2008 at OBT Bushwick/Williamsburg:

Beginning ESL

Monday to Friday 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Monday to Thursday 6 - 8:30 pm

Low Beginning ESL

Monday to Friday 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

High Beginning ESL

Monday to Thursday 6 - 8:30 pm

New Programs

Give a Little:

OBT's New Service Learning Initiative

Corporate volunteering is on the rise, and OBT is joining the curve. For the first time this cycle, all 120 of OBT's youth program participants will gain volunteer experience through OBT's new service learning initiative.

"Volunteering is the perfect platform from which our youth can practice the workplace skills that we teach them everyday," said Emily May, Special Projects Coordinator. While volunteering, trainees have the opportunities to practice their communication, customer service, and teambuilding skills.

Experience volunteering isn't lost on employers either. "When I read resumes, I look for ones that stand out from the crowd. Volunteering indicates to me that the person is committed, engaged, and sees work as more valuable than just a paycheck," said Delfi Bueno from Washington Mutual, one of OBT's recent employers.

Studies show that disadvantaged youth who engage in community service are more likely to believe they can make a difference in their communities, believe they are going to go to college, and are even more likely to discuss politics with their friends and families.

Jasmine Burgos, a trainee at OBT's Bushwick site, used service learning as an opportunity to pursue her dream to work with animals. "I got certified from FEMA and the ASPCA to volunteer with animals. Now I want to take my volunteer experience and use it to get a job as a veterinary technician," said Ms. Burgos.



Students volunteering at United Senior Center

Stay At Work Program (SAW)



Alice Goncalves
Retention Coordinator

Over the years, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow has developed new and innovative ways to communicate with current and past trainees. The Stay at Work (SAW) program was created in 1992 with the mission to provide job retention support for the newly employed.

What began initially as a monthly support group meeting of OBT alumni, the program has recently been restructured to offer better cash incentives for all attendees, promote increased use of technology, and will assist trainees in forming and running their own alumni association. According to Alice Goncalves, OBT's Retention Coordinator, the SAW program's changes are a response to the changes in the way young adults communicate and transition to employment in a technology-driven era.

With technology in mind, OBT's MySpace page, www.myspace.com/obtjobs, will serve as a communication portal for SAW and the new alumni

association. Additionally, SAW will incorporate both social and functional (theme-based) workshops in order to provide information and tools to ensure that trainees remain employed over the years.

This SAW meetings are design to promote job retention by providing workers with a forum to discuss and/or ease the transition to employment through group and individual counseling for ordinary or extreme on-the-job situations. Monetary incentives, including dinner, snacks, and free door prize of \$20 are given at each meeting.

Meetings take place once a month in different days at both OBT sites. If you would like to receive more information or want to participate, you can contact the following staff members:

Sunset Park:
First Thursday of every month
Time: 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Contact: Alice Goncalves
agoncalves@obtjobs.org
718-369-0303

OBT Bushwick/Williamsburg
Third Thursday of every month
Time: 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Contact: Petal Fogenay
pfogenay@obtjobs.org
718-387-1600

Red Hook Works



Red Hook Works is a new workforce initiative designed to assist Red Hook residents who are seeking employment, education, and job training by providing direct services and referrals to partner organizations. These services are available at no cost to Red Hook residents, thanks to support provided by IKEA.

Red Hook Works, which recently opened a new work-readiness assessment office at the corner of Van

Brunt and Delevan Streets, can help Red Hook residents prepare for potential employment opportunities at IKEA and beyond. Whether you need help writing your resume, computer training, or even GED classes, **Red Hook Works** can help you get to work.

Contact Information:

Kaziem Woodbury - Project Manager
Frank Bunkley - Vocational Counselor
Shauna Wheatt - Job Developer
Claresa Ward - Front Desk

P: 718-596-1327 / F: 718-596-1467
252 Van Brunt Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231

Services:

Computer Classes
GED Classes
Work-Readiness Workshops
National Retail Federation Certification
National Work Readiness Credentials



The Red Hook Works Team with Councilwoman Sara M. Gonzalez, third from the right.

OBT Welcomes New Staff



Mustafa Ahmed - Corporate Recruiter

Mustafa comes to OBT with almost 30 years of experience in human services. After attending New York University, he became affiliated with the National Council of Black Churchmen and went to work with Pan-African Skills on a farm cooperative in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Upon his return, he went to work as a Street Gang Worker for the NYC Youth Board. While working with the Black Spades, Savage Nomads, Ghetto Brothers, etc. he came to understand the role that unemployment and lack of opportunity played in the violent street crimes that plagued his native Bronx at that time. He found a position as a Job Developer with the Westside Cluster of Centers and Settlements and worked with them in a variety of positions under MCDA, CETA, and JTPA contracts. Later, he also worked as a Job Developer/Counselor for Vocational Foundation, Inc. and the Economic Manpower Corporation. For the past eight years Mustafa worked as the school-based Coordinator/Counselor for the Inwood House Boys to Men program which addressed the critical issues of puberty, human sexuality and teenage pregnancy. In addition to his work in human services, Mustafa is an accomplished percussionist who has performed in concert throughout the US and Rio de Janeiro, Milan, Rome, Naples Frankfurt, Berlin, and Vienna.



Vicki Dawson - Program Director

Ms. Vicki Dawson joined OBT as the Director of our new Young Adult Internship Program - Opportunity Knocks at Bushwick. Ms. Dawson is an accomplished professional with more than 12 years experience in the workforce development industry. Her expertise includes strategic planning, program design, business development, training, and staff development. She has worked with youth at Cornell University Cooperative Extension, directing internship and training programs for the New York New Media Association and the New York Software Industry Association, and as the Executive Director of Workforce Training for the New York City Department of Small Business Services. In 2005, Ms. Dawson began her own consulting practice, working with several local nonprofit organizations to strengthen their workforce and economic development initiatives. Ms. Dawson is a Coro Leadership New York Fellow, sits on the Advisory Board of Streetwise Partnerships, and is active in other networking activities. She received her Master's Degree from the New York University Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service and her Bachelors Degree from Howard University.



Petal Fogenay - Retention Specialist

She is a graduate of Adelphi University, where she received her Masters in Social Work Degree. Previously Ms. Fogenay worked for the Cases Program as a Paralegal & Court Advocate assigned to the Supreme, Criminal & Family Courts, specializing in the intervention of Juveniles at risk for long term Detention. Her most recent employment was with Workforce Career Center as a Retention & Career Advancement Specialist. Being on the retention team afforded her the opportunity to hone her outreach strategies and at the same time cultivate relationships with participant that were very key when implementing the Career advancement aspect of the job. Participants were engaged in trainings which were geared towards upward mobility; incorporating the model of advancement through Education or pay raise and promotion. Petal facilitated these workshops from the inception, and yield great results due to the consistency of connecting with customers from day one until advancement was reached. Petal is a single parent of a beautiful 9 year daughter named Ashleigh.



Nicole Mason - Corporate Recruiter

Before coming to OBT Nicole worked in both the non-profit and for profit sector and fully enjoyed both. Nicole has worked for FECS, and Goodwill Industries as a Job Developer; Department for the Aging as an Instructor/Job Developer. Nicole worked for HSBC as a customer service rep in the banking industry. She has also worked in Retail, Hospitality and in the medical field as an Intake Coordinator. Nicole recently joined OBT as a corporate recruiter because she is committed to working within community based organizations and helping them succeed, bringing her years of expertise by keeping up with industry trends



Vicki Savage - Keyboarding Instructor

Vicki is a grad of NPower NY where she was a technology student. Shortly after graduating Vicki was offered an assistant instructor position with NPower. As an assistant instructor she coordinated technology field trips, and created curriculum for the trainees. Vicki enjoyed being an assistant instructor and worked with NPower for a year. Soon, after Vicki received an offer to work as a Computer Manger at Fifth Avenue Committee. Vicki started a basic computer program at Fifth Avenue Committee from the ground up. In the two years time Vicki worked at Fifth Avenue Committee she was able to implement a number of classes. The curriculum was design to make trainees marketable in today's workforce. With in the first year at Fifth Avenue Committee Vicki realized that she wanted more training of her own, so Vicki enrolled in the Microsoft Certification program. Vicki received her Microsoft Certification in Windows XP. Vicki has found her true calling. Vicki is currently a Keyboard/ Office Procedures Instructor at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow in Sunset Park.



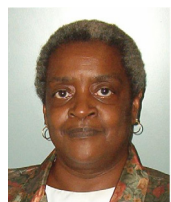
Anthony Severo - Adult Employment Services Manager (Bushwick)

Tony has served in the fields of human resources, workforce and organization development for over 25 years. He joined OBT as the Manager of the Adult Employment Program at OBT North in Bushwick/Bedford Stuyvesant at the end of November where he will coordinate all programmatic aspects interfacing with the Instructors and Job Developers to maximize placement opportunities. In 1992 Anthony joined the staff of Brooklyn College's Adult Education Division which was his first foray into JTPA contracts and the welfare to work population. This experience led to positions with SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, the WEP Program Coordinator for the Salvation Army and up until joining OBT almost 7 years with New York Job Partners/Arbor E & T performing the functions of marketing, job development, resume/cover letter writing, workshop facilitation working with both public assistance and non-PA clients at all levels. Anthony has a BA in Psychology from Hunter College.



Rodney Siau - Computer Instructor

One of OBT's newest employees is Computer Manager Rodney S. Siau. Before coming to OBT, Mr. Siau spent the last five years teaching high school mathematics in the South Bronx for the NYC Dept. of Education. Mr. Siau holds a Masters in Secondary Mathematics Education from Lehman College as well as a Bachelors in Computer Science from South Carolina State University. Mr. Siau is also an active trumpeter on the NYC music scene as well as an active participant in the music ministry of various churches in the Bed-Stuy area.



Diane Williams - English Instructor

Diane Williams is a graduate of Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa. who majored in English and Philosophy. Before coming to OBT, Diane taught English, Social Studies, Computers and Careers at JHS 45 in East Harlem for 10 years. Chosen from a handful of teachers from the N.Y. metropolitan area, Diane was awarded a National Science Foundation Grant in 1995 and became a part of Project ET (Energizing Teachers of Math, Science, and Computer Education). The one thing Diane loves, other than teaching, is writing. She has published short stories and poetry over the years, and continues to hone her craft. In 1998, with her daughter, a budding playwright, Diane helped bring some of their characters to life in two plays staged at Touro College and off-Broadway. The mother/daughter team also founded a group, Sister to Sister. It essentially allowed women from all walks of life to share their crafts with one another – everything from needlecraft to written and spoken word. In 2002 Diane moved to Maryland, continuing to work with young people. She taught in the Responsible Actions Program, helping youth and parents find alternative methods of dealing with conflict, and the Alternative to Drugs Program which assisted young people in making wise choices when confronted with drug and alcohol decisions.

Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

Randolph Peers
Executive Director

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Visit us online at:
www.obtjobs.org

Spotlight on Success:

In May 1993, Delfi Bueno graduated from the Fashion Industry High School and her only work experience was as a cashier in a local supermarket. She heard about Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) through friends and family members, and she decided to give it chance.

"I didn't want to continue being a cashier in PathMark, so I decided to come to OBT to upgrade my skills and get a better job", said Ms Bueno about what motivated her to come to OBT.

Ms. Bueno enrolled in OBT along with two friends in 1994. Of the three, she was the only one to complete the program, a testament to the tough standards and high expectations OBT has for its trainees.

"When I came to OBT I had no skills. But in the time I was there, I learned how to type, han-

dle a computer and learned how to prepare for an interview," remarked Ms. Bueno. "The world of work classes I will never forget – especially being video taped during a mock interview. I was very nervous, but that helped me to be more confident in myself."

Today she is a Senior Human Resources Recruiter for the Northeast Division at Washington Mutual. Her first placement from OBT was at Greater New York Savings bank as a Teller. In between, she worked for Kelly Services and for Spherion, two recruitment and placement firms located in New York City.

Recently, Washington Mutual, through Ms. Bueno, has turned to OBT for its hiring needs.

"Its great when successful OBT alumni like Ms. Bueno give back to the organization. In this case, as a recruiter who fully understands our program model and



Delfi Bueno, OBT Alumni 1994, Senior Recruiter for the Northeast Division in the HR at Washington Mutual

its high standards, Ms. Bueno is creating a win-win scenario for us and her company," said Randy Peers, OBT's Executive Director.

"Coming to OBT was the best decision I ever made, and I am proud to contribute to development and success of these young adults", concluded Mr. Bueno.

Questions or comments
info@obtjobs.org

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