

# Lines of Opportunity

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## BETWEEN THE LINES



Randy Peers  
Executive Director

Recently I had the opportunity to present testimony at the Tri-Level Legislative Task Force (City, State, Federal) regarding the youth employment crisis and "Jobs for the 21st Century." Here is some of what I said:

You can hardly open a newspaper or turn on the TV without hearing about the effects of the recession. Unemployment is up, foreclosures are up, and overall wages are at their lowest levels, factoring for inflation, since the 1970's. Yet while a nationwide lingering unemployment rate of 9.3% (8.6% in NYC) is high by historic standards, unemployment among young adults aged 17-24, is at crisis levels. Estimates nationwide peg the unemployment rate for this group between 25-30%. And while NYC is faring a bit better, estimates put the rate at just below 20%, young adults are particularly vulnerable during economic recessions, as dislocated workers with more experience move into jobs that are typically reserved for youth and other low skilled workers.

When it comes to youth, to the disagreement of a many of my fellow workforce development practitioners, I am not a big advocate for "sector-based" strategies. I am even less of a fan of the "green jobs" phenomenon that has yet to manifest itself. Rather, in our world, we tend to focus on transferable skill sets that position young people to take advantage of a wide-range of opportunities across a host of industries. Many of these skill sets fall into what is commonly known as "soft-skills", basic educational development, and the increasingly important critical thinking skills. Simply put, we want our young people, and most workers for that matter, to be able to read, write and speak effectively; manage interpersonal relationships well and; have the ability to problem-solve on a regular basis. Throw in some conflict resolution skills and basic numeracy coupled with the ability to get to work on time, and you probably have the framework for a good employee, regardless of the sector or job type.

OBT's model of working with young adults has managed to successfully integrate much of the above-mention needed elements required to prepare youth for entry-level employment. Our signature program is our Youth Education and Job Training Program that integrates business skills job training with GED instruction, providing for both vocational and education success. Confidence, personal discipline, and professionalism provide the philosophical underpinnings for the model itself. And applied learning activities, such as *Public Speaking*, *Service Learning* and *Speed Networking* address the soft-skills and critical thinking objectives. Taken together, OBT's program offers a powerful counterbalance to the young adult employment crisis!

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season!

# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Article reprinted from  
The Brooklyn Daily Eagle.  
By John Torenli.  
Published on 9/21/10

## First Time's The Charm

### FDNY Captures Battle of the Badges Title in Debut Appearance

Maybe the FDNY should have gotten involved in this Battle of the Badges Softball Tournament sooner? More than 2,000 fans showed up at MCU Park in Coney Island last Saturday to watch New York's bravest post a 2-0 victory over the Port Authority Police Department in the annual championship game benefiting the Brooklyn non-profit, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow.



Jeanne B. Mullgrav, Commissioner of NYC Dept. of Youth & Community Development, gives introductory speech.

Joining the NYPD, PAPD and NYC Department of Corrections in the charity-driven event for the first time, the fireman of our city outlasted the NYPD, 2-1, in a marathon 12-inning opening game before knocking off the defending champs from the PAPD via shutout.

"It's a real pleasure and an honor for the FDNY to participate in this event, the Battle of the Badges," said Salvatore Cassano, Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department. "Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow represents the best of what we can do for young people and we're proud to participate."

"I'm incredibly grateful for all the support we received for the Battle of the Badges, which will help us achieve our organization's mission to help people gain self-sufficiency through education, job training, and employment," said Randy Peers, executive director of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow.

Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow serves over 2,000 people annually out of three locations, including one in Brooklyn's Sunset Park and two more in Bushwick.



Thank you to all our sponsors!



## Gabriela Flores – YAIP Success Story

One day, Gabriela Flores – 21 at the time and 9 months pregnant – came across an ad offering free social work services. Gabriela was unemployed and had to stop attending classes at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) after only one semester due to her pregnancy. Her mother, a Mexican immigrant who came to the U.S. in search for a better life, was working at a factory but was not earning enough to sustain her family. They decided to call the number on the ad, and the social worker referred Gabriela to OBT.

When her baby girl turned two months old, Gabriela came to OBT and joined the Opportunity Knocks Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) at Bushwick. YAIP is sponsored by the New York City Department of Youth & Community Development and provides young adults, 17-24, with the opportunity to participate in a paid internship at a corporation, non-profit or government-based agency.

Although Gabriela was excited to be in the program, it was difficult for her to financially support her newborn, her 4-year-old

daughter, mother, younger sister, and nephew. She could not afford childcare and had to obtain assistance from her boyfriend's family. "It was not easy coming to OBT and sometimes I wanted to give up, but Mr. James [OBT Counselor] was always there to motivate me and help me through my struggles," says Gabriela.

Gabriela was fortunate enough to be placed in the Marketing Department at Royal Health Care, LLC. Royal Health Care offers a broad portfolio of products and services including parameter-driven transaction applications, data center outsourcing services, and consulting services tailored to the changing needs of healthcare payers. According to her supervisor, Tony Loiaza, Assistant Marketing Director, "I have never had a problem hiring OBT students because they are very good workers. Gabriela has been a fantastic worker since day one. What I love most about her is that she is extremely motivated and is hungry to learn."

Following her temporary hire, the position was converted to fulltime as a Telemarketing Representative. According to

Gabriela, "I applied what I learned at OBT and put my best foot forward and ended up getting hired. OBT showed me how to believe in myself. My life is more stable now and I am learning how to manage work and my family life."

Gabriela is planning on going back to BMCC in the fall to pursue a career as a Police Officer. Her experience proves that if you apply OBT's 3 principles, Confidence, Discipline and Professionalism, you can accomplish what seemed impossible.

For more information on YAIP, contact 718-387-1600.



## Speed Networking Takes Off at OBT

Imagine you were invited to an event that can help you advance professionally. You practice your "elevator speech" as you wait nervously, clinging to copies of your resume. You will have seven minutes with six professionals, and one chance to make a good impression. You may meet a commodities trader, a risk assessment officer, a secretary, or maybe even a vice president. Talk about pressure! This day finally arrived for OBT trainees in the form of Speed Networking, and most are up to the challenge.

OBT recognizes that networking is an essential component of any job search, and an important business skill since 80%



Speed Networking with Morgan Stanley

of people get their jobs through people they know. OBT works with disadvantaged young adults entering the workforce for the first time, and few have extensive professional or social networks. Without a network or significant work history, our young adults are only dependent on their ability to sell themselves in an interview.

Speed Networking is a component of OBT's applied learning curriculum, which includes Public Speaking and Communication, as well as service learning. It gives our youth an opportunity to learn about new professions, gain perspectives on career pathways, expand their professional networks, and practice their interviewing skills. In the last two years since OBT pioneered this strategy, trainees have participated in several events with companies such as Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Moody's Investment Services, and HR New York. For the professionals who participate, Speed Networking offers a low-impact way for them to get involved with our youth. A few hours out of their regular workday has significant impact by providing the young adults with a boost in

self-confidence and, ultimately, success in their interview.

During an event, trainees have seven minutes for informational interviews with six professionals. Following each interview, the professionals fill out a feedback card for each young adult. At the conclusion of the event, the trainees and professionals are then given the opportunity to mingle more informally, following up on their sessions and getting to know each other better. According to Michelle, a trainee in OBT's Youth Education & Job Training program, "I really enjoyed Speed Networking, especially the elevator speech part because it helped me to really focus my message about myself."

Speed Networking also gives professionals the opportunity to understand the struggles of the underserved youth within NYC. This summer, Kathy, a Goldman Sachs staff member stated that she had "so much fun getting to know the students and left feeling truly inspired. I hope that we were able to have as positive an impact on the students' lives as they did on ours."

## OBT Welcomes New Staff



**Bryant Lee**  
Chief Fiscal Officer

Prior to joining OBT, Bryant worked in various non-profit organizations within the past 11 years. His previous roles included working as a Senior Accountant at both the I.U.O.E. Local 15, and at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum in NYC. More recently he was the Controller at Historic Hudson Valley in Tarrytown, NY. There he led organization-wide audits, was responsible for the organization's day-to-day accounting and financial operations, and also served as a member of the Finance & Audit Committee and the Investment Committee.



**Kim Murrell-Robinson**  
Director,  
Young Adult Internship Program

Kim has over 15 years of experiences in Employment and Education Performance Based Contracts; Staff Training; Job Development and Career Counseling. As the Program Director, for Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen Council Career Services, she managed the program's day to day operation; developed and managed initiatives and joint ventures with businesses and other community based organizations; developed career related curriculums and workshops. Kim earned a BA, in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Public Administration and Criminal Justice at The City College of the City University of New York.



**Evelyn Ortiz**  
Director,  
Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships

Prior to joining OBT as the Director of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships, Evelyn served as the Director of Constituent Affairs for a New York State Senator in Brooklyn. The position required her to oversee a myriad of constituent issues and concerns. She coordinated and implemented workforce development initiatives and developed and maintained key relationships with diverse ethnic/cultural groups and leaders on all pertinent legislative issues. Evelyn is a graduate of Stony Brook University and holds a Masters Degree in Social Work and Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Sciences.



**Digmarie Ruiz**  
Assistant Director,  
Bushwick Workforce Resource Center

Prior to joining OBT, Digmarie was a Program Coordinator at Futures and Options, a career readiness and internship program for high school students, where she was responsible for internship and pre-internship programs. Digmarie is also an alumna of Coro Leadership NY, a civic leadership development program, which provides leadership training through experiential learning. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from Russell Sage College, and an M.A. from Pace University.



**Nicole Choi**  
Performance  
Management  
Associate



**Kevin Guscott**  
Youth  
Employment  
Coordinator  
(YAIP Bushwick)



**Evelyn Castillo**  
Senior  
Program  
Associate  
(Bushwick)



**Wayne James**  
Counselor  
(Sunset Park)



**Daniel Veliz**  
Recruitment  
and Outreach  
Associate



**William Quinones**  
Counselor  
(Bushwick)



**Ielisa Maddison**  
Case Manager  
(YAIP Bushwick)



**Joan McCroud**  
Corporate  
Recruiter  
(Bushwick)



**Shant Melkonian**  
College Access  
Coordinator

## OBT Upcoming Events

### Career Fair at OBT Sunset Park

Thursday, December 9, 2010  
9:30am — 12:30pm

### Debate Day

Thursday, January 6, 2011  
8:00am — 12:00pm  
Marriott Downtown Brooklyn

Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow is now registering for the February 2011 Cycle!

For additional information check us out on:



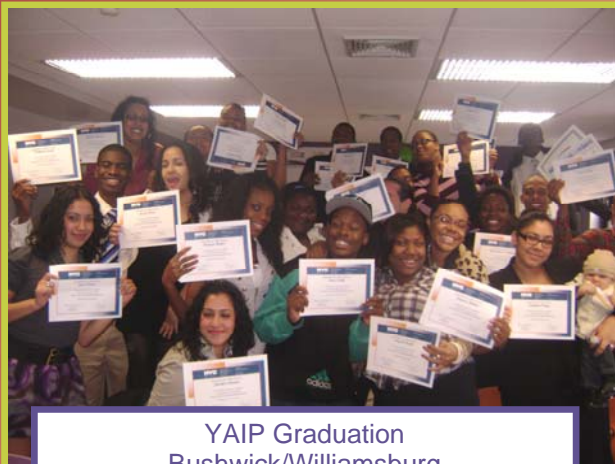
# Happenings *Around* OBT



Service Learning  
Dress For Success  
September 2010



Debate Day  
June 2010



YAIP Graduation  
Bushwick/Williamsburg  
October 2010



OSY & YAIP Students vs. Staff  
Potluck Competition  
November 2010



Job Fair  
OBT Bushwick  
October 2010



Financial Literacy Workshop With  
Amalgamated Bank  
November 2010

Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

Randolph Peers  
Executive Director

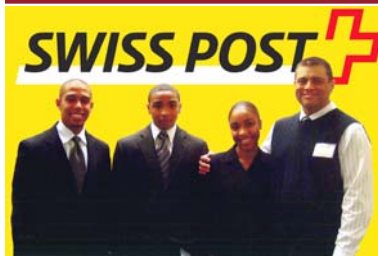
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## Employer Spotlight: Swiss Post Solutions



Their core values focus on being Reliable, Value-Enhancing and Sustainable.

In the past two years, SPS has hired over 60 OBT trainees and has ensured that each one identifies with their company's mission, vision, and service commitment. In many ways, SPS' supportive philosophy is a perfect fit for OBT's disciplined but empathetic approach to working with young adults new to the workforce.

This summer, SPS hosted three young people as part of OBT's Young Adult Internship Program. Under the guidance of Paul Ortega, Director of Employee & Organizational Development, the interns spent twelve weeks working onsite, participating in leadership development courses, and receiving mentoring.

According to Terri Saucier, Corporate Recruiter for OBT, "When Swiss Post agrees to hire an OBT student, they do not see this individual as just another employee. Instead they see this person as a future company investment; one that will take their industry to new heights."

SPS has committed time and energy into preparing OBT trainees for supervisory roles by conducting in-depth Management Training sessions, ongoing communication, and feedback to OBT staff regarding individual improvement. SPS also organizes workshops for OBT staff onsite or at one of their locations to help facilitate the customized curriculum implementation and to share other necessary feedback directly with staff. Lastly, to ensure that each trainee receives the skills to advance in the workforce, SPS provides education development workshops.

"OBT is an example of how one life can positively influence the lives of many. The staff does it with courage, they do it with grace, they do it with their style, but most importantly they do it with integrity. This is why we are proud and honored to be partners with such an organization," states Mr. Ortega.

Swiss Post Solutions is committed to OBT, and the invaluable support they provide helps trainees succeed at Swiss Post and in future endeavors.

How many people can say they work for a company that cares about their advancement or that their supervisors have empathy towards their life struggles? If you work for Swiss Post Solutions (SPS), then the answer is you! That's why SPS and OBT formed a strategic partnership to hire our trainees and provide them with the opportunity to be mentored.

As part of the global Swiss Post organization, SPS provides outsourcing solutions that bring highly-skilled people, best-in-class processes, and unbiased technology solutions. They offer a wide range of custom-fit local, national, and global solutions for corporations and firms including Records Management, IT Services, Word Processing Services, Messenger Services, and more.

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*Building careers through confidence, discipline, and professionalism*

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