

• LEADERSHIP • SERVICE • YOUTH COUNCILS • ADVOCACY •

ATION • EMPLOYMENT

ARTS • ATHLETICS •

The Youth Development Institute/ Fund for the City of New York

Ten Programs For Teens

NEW YORK CITY BEACONS



ADVOCACY • ARTS • ATHLE

EMPLOYMENT • LEADERSHIP

• SERVICE • YOUTH COUNCILS • ADVOCACY • ARTS •

The Youth Development Institute/ Fund for the City of New York

Ten Programs For Teens

NEW YORK CITY BEACONS



Acknowledgements

The project for adolescent programs was supported by a grant from the Pinkerton Foundation, which has made the well-being of adolescents a major focus of its work. During this three-year grant, the Youth Development Institute received support to provide assistance to Beacon Centers in creating and strengthening programs for adolescents. The work including training, consultation, assessment and provision of regrant funds to Beacons.

The Youth Development Institute/Fund for the City of New York is deeply appreciative of the Pinkerton Foundation's commitment to adolescents and support for and understanding of our work. We also wish to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for its support of the Beacons.

The program descriptions in this booklet were researched and written by Suri Duitch and edited by Kat McGowan. We thank them and the many Beacon program staff members who took time to share their work. Marsha Milan of YDI supervised production of this booklet. Jasmine Cruz took the photographs.



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements **i**

Introduction **iii**

Project Descriptions

I Alianza Dominicana **1**
Youth Leadership Programming at La Plaza Cultural

II Center for Family Life **4**
Beacon Neighborhood Center

**III St. Nicholas Neighborhood
Preservation Corporation** **7**
Grand Street Beacon Literacy Peers/Literacy Staff

IV The Valley **11**
Paul Robeson Leadership Program/Second Chance Youth Development Program

Project Summaries

**V Church Avenue Merchants
Block Association** **15**
Beacon Sports and Career Association

VI Good Shepherd Services **16**
Women in Motion

VII Pathways for Youth **17**
Youth Learning Through the Arts

VIII Project Reach Youth **18**
Youth Council: A Youth Voice in Programming

IX Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center **19**
College Career Prep Program

X United Activities Unlimited, Incorporated ... **20**
Engaging Young Women: Teen Group

About the Fund for the City of New York **21**

**About the Youth Development Institute
of the Fund for the City of New York** **22**

Program Locations **23**

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents and young adults often have remarkable resources of passion, commitment and intellectual energy. Strong youth development programs tap these qualities and support partnership between young people and adults. In these relationships, young people are involved in determining needs and addressing them. They work to improve neighborhoods and help peers while they develop skills they need. This booklet describes New York City Beacon programs that successfully challenge and engage teens and young adults.



Supporting each other, The Valley

programs that successfully challenge and engage teens and young adults.

The Youth Development Institute offers these descriptions in order to promote discussion and study of effective methods for working with youth. This dialog is especially important today. As the pace of change in the 21st century accelerates, citizens and workers need increasingly sophisticated analytical abilities and skill at handling information in order to succeed in workplaces and participate in our democratic society. These changes challenge schools and community programs to work effectively with teens and develop environments that will enable young people to prepare for a

different world.

Too often, adolescents can't find that support. Many high schools have difficulty gaining the attention of adolescents and helping them build their skills. After-school and weekend programs also search for new ways to address teen needs and abilities.

The Beacon Centers (see below for more on Beacons) described in this booklet encourage young people to be the active agents of their own development. Adults support that progress with structured activities, resources and caring human contact. These Centers are developing the types of programs and activities that both challenge and support young people.

Interviews with staff of the Beacon programs described in this booklet revealed a few key themes:

- **Partnerships.** Young people want to be partners in the process of building programs.
- **Caring relationships with adults and peers.** Relationships are what draw teens to youth programs, and also the glue that holds them there. Talking, collaborating, developing social networks—these engage young people, help them to develop social and practical skills, and connect them to a community.
- **Challenges.** For young people, nothing is more off-putting than disrespect. High expectations for both tasks and behavior give young people a sense of pride and motivate them to master new skills.
- **Real-world tasks.** Public performances, public service, creating tangible products, mentoring. All of us like to make a concrete difference in the world, including young people. Effective programs give them opportunities to do so.

- **Continuity.** Young people need to be able to work with the same adults and youth over long periods of time. They also need consistent rules and expectations.
- **Staff development.** Training and consultation improve the understanding of youth development, and help organizations build programs for adolescents.

Beacon centers offer an especially strong platform from which to operate programs for adolescents. Located in public schools, Beacons generally provide a rich variety of services—literacy, homework help, athletics, cultural activities and tutoring. Many of these services integrate real learning with fun and engaging activities. Often, young people benefit both by receiving and by giving services to others in Beacons.

Beacons are also closely tied to specific communities. Many Beacon employees live near the Beacon Center. Community organizations that operate Beacons are well-known locally, and have long histories of serving the neighborhood. Those longstanding ties build trust with young people, their parents, and other caregivers.

Beacons also have a diverse range of programs and people. That richness allows adolescents to choose the areas of interest and people that they connect with best, allowing them to explore new possibilities and decide for themselves where to invest their energies.

Of the ten programs described in this booklet, four are explored in detail. Each is notable for the consistency and strength of its youth development programs, and for its ability to work with large numbers of adolescents, including many who have traditionally been difficult to reach. All ten programs have demonstrated effective practices, and we are pleased that they have encouraged us to work with them and describe their efforts.

Beacons

The New York City Beacons: Beacons are community centers located in public school buildings, offering a range of activities and services to participants of all ages, before and after school, in the evenings, and on the weekend. The Beacons initiative is funded and administered by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). Beacons are managed by community-based organizations and work collaboratively with school boards, their host schools, community advisory councils, and a wide range of neighborhood organizations and institutions.

The Beacons initiative is a complex and ambitious model of school-community-family partnerships established in 1991. Currently funded at \$36 million a year with 80 sites, the initiative enables community-based, not-for-profit agencies to create school-based community centers as “safe havens” providing stimulating, structured, supervised activities for children, youth and families in New York City neighborhoods. Over time, Beacons have become a focal point for neighborhood improvement efforts. In 2001 alone, more than 180,000 children, youth and families were served.

ALIANZA DOMINICANA

Youth Leadership Programming at La Plaza Cultural

In keeping with the young immigrant community it serves, sponsoring agency Alianza Dominicana has always emphasized youth leadership. With two 19-year-old co-directors and strong local demand for programs outside of school hours, La Plaza Cultural Beacon was youth-run from its very beginnings.

As Alianza has grown, its Beacon members have too, becoming tutors, members of the General Youth Council, program directors in the Beacon and in other parts of the agency, and generally taking on roles with increasing responsibility. This organic growth has always been part of the agency's mandate, says executive director Moises Perez: "Alianza is a leadership university for young people. For young people who make themselves available, there is so much they can do here, and so many roles." Today, both La Plaza's original co-directors are still involved in youth development. One runs a second Alianza Beacon in the Bronx, and the other is a senior staff member at a New York City nonprofit focused on youth.

Agency Description

Alianza Dominicana is a multi-service nonprofit agency in upper Manhattan's Washington Heights, a neighborhood densely populated with immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Alianza was founded in 1987, at a time when there were virtually no local services tailored to the fast-growing Dominican community. Alianza now provides a range of social services, including foster care prevention, mental health counseling, substance abuse prevention and treatment, child care, and other services designed to help recent immigrants adjust to life in New York City. La Plaza Cultural, Alianza's Beacon after-school program at Intermediate School 143, was the first Beacon in New York. It opened in June 1991.

General Program Description

La Plaza Cultural offers four types of programs: sports and recreation, cultural activities, including dance, painting, and video production; educational activities such as tutoring; and community involvement through service projects and organizing. Young people have a variety of leadership development opportunities at the Beacon, most notably in the General Youth Council (GYC). The GYC plans and runs a number of programs for the Beacon and the larger community each year, including an annual youth conference that attracts several hundred people, a food drive, a Thanksgiving dinner, and social activities for neighborhood kids and families. La Plaza is open from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on weekends. The General Youth Council meets every school day from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Who the Program Serves

Youth at this Beacon are almost all Dominican-American, but the program also includes some African-Americans as well. Most live nearby in upper Manhattan's Washington Heights and Inwood neighborhoods. Many are currently in high school; the rest attend college or have dropped out of high school. Some initially come to GYC as part of a required community service project for school, a probation agreement, or a community service sentence. Members range from 14 to 24 years old, with the majority between 15 to 19.

Staff estimate that 1,700 young people are involved in this Beacon every year, including roughly 500 to 600 regular participants. The GYC has about 15 active members, plus another 20 who attend less frequently. Sixty other teens work part-time on staff at La Plaza.

History of the Program's Development

Alianza first became involved at I.S. 143 because of a complaint from a local father that a dean at the school was sexually abusing his daughter. Backed by the community, the agency successfully demanded that the dean be fired and prosecuted. That struggle was the beginning of a major housecleaning in the school, which brought in a new principal and many new teachers. When the city of New York issued its first Request for Proposals to operate Beacons, Alianza applied to launch one at I.S. 143. It was a bold move, considering that the contracts were very competitive, Alianza was a relatively new agency, and both of the young men who would lead the program were only 19. Alianza won nonetheless.

From the start, this Beacon was youth-run and youth-controlled: its co-directors were young, and none of the other staff was much older. “This was students taking charge of the school,” founding co-director Eddie Silverio says now. Decisions about which programs to offer and how to run the Beacon were made by the young people themselves.

The new program got off the ground quickly. Each of the ten new Beacons was supposed to open its doors and begin hiring staff on June 1, 1991. By that time, Alianza had already hired a staff, asked students for programming suggestions, and even hosted a youth conference that first day. One hundred twenty-five neighborhood teens attended the conference, which became a yearly GYC event (see below).

Youth volunteers and part-time employees set up the after-school program, formed a Beacon security staff, and started neighborhood improvement campaigns such as voter registration and immunization drives. Teens’ suggestions also led to specific programs: Alianza developed an adult English as a Second Language course when teens said that they often had to leave school to translate for their parents at the doctor’s office or immigration office. The after-school program expanded from middle-school to younger children when Beacon teens pointed out that they had to go home and care for their younger sisters and brothers, who themselves had little to do after school.

In the first few years, the essential components of the Beacon program were crafted: tutoring, sports, community service, cultural activities such as dance, theater and mask-making, and ESL, GED, and literacy courses for adults. The program’s founders also developed a pathway, so that children who aged out of the tutoring program became volunteers and then members of the GYC or perhaps assistants to the cultural activities staff. That pathway has established continuity at La Plaza: almost all of the current senior staff and management started with the program in elementary or middle school.

That original structure has served La Plaza well as the program has matured. Perez says that both the challenges that neighborhood teens face and the aims of La Plaza’s youth development programs have stayed fairly constant. “The issues have not dramatically changed, in that there is no new element that wasn’t there—the drugs, the gangs. All existed, if not to the same extent.”

Structure

General Youth Council. Up until the 2001-2002 school year, the GYC

met twice a week. Now, thanks to funding from the federal Workforce Investment Act, La Plaza can pay teens minimum wage for daily meetings. “We used to have problems getting them here enough because they needed to get jobs to help sup-

port their families or had transportation problems,” says Angel Guillermo, a former assistant director. “The pay provides a real incentive.” Enrollment is open all year for all teens at the Beacon, and there are no specific requirements for participation. “Anybody can do it as long as they can contribute,” says Edgar, a GYC member.

Youth Employment. Young people work from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Beacon every day and are encouraged to stay after 7 p.m. to do their homework. All employees are trained in first aid, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, and CPR. Tutors spend a week in training at the beginning of the year and have two-hour staff meetings every Friday. Other youth staffers get additional task-specific training from their supervisors.

Program Elements

General Youth Council. Much of the GYC’s work involves organizing events and activities. Its biggest event

is an annual youth conference that attracts several hundred attendees from the neighborhood and the rest of the city. Organized around a theme—2002’s is “Awakenings”—the conference includes speakers, panels, music and dance performances, networking opportunities, and features guest stars such as well-known rap musicians. General Youth Council members must choose a theme, schedule speakers and entertainers, and figure out the logistics for activities.

The council also runs an annual Thanksgiving soup kitchen and food drive, a college fair in the fall, parties for youth and neighborhood families for Christmas and Halloween, plus other events and community service projects. In 2001, the group threw a Halloween fund-raiser for the family of a Beacon participant who had lost someone in the attack on the World Trade Center.

Not all of the GYC’s time is spent planning and organizing—the council also hosts workshops on sex education, career education, résumé building, and money management. From time to time, members also go on field trips and group retreats.

Marlene Urbaez, 19, is the council’s coordinator. She supports GYC members, keeping up with their personal lives, monitoring their grades, and connecting them to other programs if necessary. Other La Plaza staffers are also involved: The director and assistant director of La Plaza often attend GYC meetings, tracking the council’s activities and offering guidance and advice.

Youth Employment. The Beacon also employs young people to tutor, do administrative and security work, and teach dance, arts, and crafts. The part-time youth staff includes many tutors,

Eddie
Silverio,
Beacon
Director



who work with the 250 elementary and middle-school children who attend the program each afternoon.

Role of Staff Members in the Program

Six full-time staff members (three under age 25) work at the Beacon, and 42 work part-time. About eight of the

part-time workers are in high school and many of the rest are in college. Beacon youth also work in other parts of the agency—Alianza employs close to 300 young people overall with federal WIA funding. Almost every youth employee at the agency started out by getting involved in the Beacon.

Beacon Space

I.S. 143 is strongly identified with La Plaza Cultural, and Alianza has successfully integrated most of its functions and

services into the physical space of the school. In fact, the agency considers La Plaza its primary gateway for neighborhood services.

In What Ways is it a Youth Development Program?

Continuity of Supports

Alianza's basic philosophy is that youth development involves the

entire family. In part, that credo stems from the character of the community, where immediate and extended families tend to be close-knit, and where young people often care for their younger siblings and help their parents and older relatives cope with the English-speaking world.

As a result, the Beacon has become a port of entry for all Alianza services. Younger children come to La Plaza for fun, cultural projects and help with schoolwork. Parents come for ESL, GED training, and for related services.

Opportunities to Make a Contribution

Many say that part of La Plaza's appeal is the opportunity to publicly represent the community in a positive light. "I'm proud to be part of this community, but sometimes we have a bad rep-

utation," says GYC's Edgar. "Anytime you find something that is positive, something good, we want people to see it, that there is a group of us in it, so people might start to think differently about our community."

Community Building

GYC member Yokasta says the chance to make new connections with the rest of the community is important: "We did Thanksgiving dinner, where we invite the less fortunate and feed them, and we went out in the streets... bringing people in. A couple of days after, one of the men came up to me and said 'God bless you,' in the subway and everyone was smiling at me. It makes you feel good that people remember you for something good and not something bad."

La Plaza also works to keep Dominican traditions alive, like dance and mask-making. Alianza will be the lead participant in a Smithsonian Institution project organized to showcase the culture and customs of the Dominican Republic in 2003.

Opportunities for Caring Relationships

GYC members and other Beacon participants can develop supportive relationships with a network of staffers, including a case manager. The GYC coordinator plays this role most explicitly, taking an active interest in members' lives and helping them negotiate specific problems. Additionally, many former Beacon members are still connected to the program. Since the program is more than 10 years old, those earlier generations of youth leaders now range from their mid teens to their early 30s. Because this neighborhood is tightly-knit, this Beacon has been able to forge enduring connections between current and former members.

Peer Group Development

Through daily meetings and collective responsibilities, GYC members develop their own peer group. Urbacaez says that even those who are obliged to join the GYC for a community service requirement end up engaged with the group. "Kids start realizing that they are a part of something... People here are friendly, and like a family."

Safety

La Plaza has two adult and seven youth security guards. When the Beacon first opened, security was a constant problem at I.S. 143—graffiti, vandalism, and fights after school. The street right in front of the school was littered with stolen and plundered cars. The Beacon's staff and participants helped change this by painting murals on the school's exterior walls and rehabbing the playground. Security problems at the school are now rare.

CENTER FOR FAMILY LIFE

Beacon Neighborhood Center

Agency Description

The Center for Family Life (CFL) is a nonprofit based in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Founded in 1978, CFL's programs currently include youth development and employment, after-school and summer day camp programs, counseling, adult employment training, crisis intervention and advocacy, and a foster care program that places Sunset Park children in neighborhood homes.

General Program Description

Started with a grant from the Pinkerton Foundation, the Neighborhood Center at P.S. 314 began with the idea of reaching out to local teens spending their social time on neighborhood streets. Unlike other Beacons, it is based in the schoolyard itself. The program provides sports leagues, a safe place for young children to play, social space for all neighborhood residents, and organized activities for preteens and adolescents.

Who the Program Serves

The Neighborhood Center draws everyone: young mothers with toddlers, pre-teens and teenagers, soccer-playing adults. Unlike other Beacon programs, which serve predominantly Dominican, Puerto Rican and Chinese populations, this Beacon primarily brings in people originally from Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. Sunset Park is a young neighborhood—a third of the residents are under age 20—yet it has very few areas for socializing and play and few constructive activities for youth.

In 2001, the program included more than 1,300 people on its registry. Five hundred and thirty of them were between the ages of 12 and 18. Roughly two-thirds of the teens at the center are boys. Between 130 and 200 people sign in at the Neighborhood Center each day.

History of the Program's Development

In the summer of 1999, the Beacon's Youth Leadership Council (see description below) were concerned that many Sunset Park teens had few constructive opportunities, and spent a lot of their time on the street.

At that time, the schoolyard was effectively an extension of the street. Local teens hung out there, drinking, fighting, mixing with gangs, and generally making it difficult for anyone but themselves to use it. As Kixmiller says, "There are young people here who sleep all day, get up at 2 p.m., wander to the corner and buy a ham and cheese, and wander over to the schoolyard to see what's going on and who is around. Their lives don't really start until 4 p.m."

CFL decided to take a new approach to reach these young people. It launched the Neighborhood Center, originally called the New Generation Teen Center, as a way to literally expand the boundaries of the P.S. 314 Beacon into this teen-held territory. As soon as P.S. 314 took over the schoolyard on behalf of local teens, however, people of all ages in need of a place to play and socialize also started coming.

Once other neighborhood people began showing up, they created pressure on teens who used it as a hangout to either leave or behave more respectfully. From Kixmiller's point of view, the program succeeded because it puts teens in a community context. The structure and layout of the center integrated teens with children and adults, limiting their tendency to isolate themselves. At the same time, the program set up new opportunities for these youth to get involved in the community and join other teens active in the Beacon.

W

hen the Center for Family Life opened a Beacon at Public School 314 in 1993, it didn't have to look far for members—the agency had long experience with programs for children and adolescents. But teen leaders on this Beacon's Youth Council had growing concerns about their peers on the street, many of whom spent their days sleeping and spent their nights drinking. The Beacon was not reaching those teenagers, and the leaders in the program wanted to devise a way to connect with them, too.

In order to engage these young people, Amy LaTorres, the Youth Council's coordinator, and John Kixmiller, the Beacon's director, decided to invert the typical Beacon model. Instead of trying to lure these teens inside the Beacon, they would bring the Beacon to them. They would expand the program to the schoolyard, where many of these teens hung out, and reach out to a previously isolated group.



The center is now a gathering place for hundreds of local residents of all ages. Its core purpose is still to provide a space for constructive activities and an avenue into the Beacon's youth development programs for local teens who might otherwise be resistant or difficult to engage.

Structure | The overall feel of the Neighborhood Center is informal and unstructured, though activities such as soccer, dance, and newsletter writing and reporting typically take place every day. That informality is appropriate to the center, given the vagaries of the weather, the small adult staff, and the purposefully low threshold for participation to attract youth who may be reluctant to join organized activities.

Program Elements and Activities | The list of activities at the Center is evolving—since it is relatively flexible and informal, staff members and participants are free to think up new things to do and organize them as time and resources permit. Currently, the center offers:

- Soccer (leagues for all ages)
- Baseball (leagues are in formation)
- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Dance
- Table Games

The Neighborhood Center also has schoolyard beautification projects such as mural painting and gardening and various media activities, including video projects and the newsletter.

The Neighborhood Center is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays from 3:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. from April 1 through October 31. Closing time varies depending on the season.

Counselors in Training (CITs). CITs are the center of youth development programming at the Beacon. The program was launched because many young people were looking for ways to stay involved with the Beacon once they outgrew the elementary school child care program. Beacon members are eligible to become CITs at age 13, after interviewing with a staff supervisor that has an opening available.

As apprentices, these young people work alongside adult staff in all Beacon programs, participating in weekly tutoring sessions, staff meetings and trainings, and discussion groups. In the Neighborhood Center, the counselors in training help staffers with specific activities, and also keep an eye on things—watching over younger children and monitoring safety.

Approximately half the CITs have been involved with the Beacon since elementary school, and many are ultimately hired as staff. Each earns a monthly stipend of \$25 during the school year.

Some CITs are young adults, but the younger adolescents especially benefit from the program. Their counselor-in-training work allows them to take responsibility for and help out, while being part of a structured and supportive youth development program..

Youth Staff Members. Teens are eligible to join the staff once they turn 16, and many do: of the 38 staffers, 66 percent were former CITs.

Youth Council. The Beacon's Youth Council represents youth concerns and suggestions regarding program and community issues. All Beacon members are eligible to join. Recruitment is held about once a year.

The council typically chooses a few programs like events or community service projects each year, sponsoring family dinners, performances, and social gatherings. It has also instituted a social and recreational Teen Lounge inside the Beacon that is open four evenings a week.

Neighborhood Volunteers. As the Neighborhood Center's program evolved, a number of teens and young adults emerged as leaders. Many now function as an informal volunteer staff, particularly as soccer referees. The Beacon would like to hire more of these young people but as many are undocumented immigrants, it is often prevented from doing so.

Certain staff members take charge of specific activities, whether teaching and supervising the newsletter production group, teaching a dance class, or coaching soccer. But overall, the loose structure and lean staffing require employees and volunteers to be flexible, jumping in to fill gaps when they arise.

Neighborhood Center Space

P.S. 314 and its schoolyard take up an entire city block. The schoolyard runs along 4th Avenue, with a single large asphalt playing area and a neighboring children's playground bounded by a separate fence. It also includes a few other small spaces around the school entrances. Neighborhood Center participants have planted a small garden in one, and another is used for dance activities. On one end of the large asphalt area are two basketball courts. Typically, half of the large space is used for a soccer game; the other half for basketball. A volleyball game is sometimes set up in between.

In What Ways is it a Youth Development Program?

The Neighborhood Center fosters an informal approach to developing leadership.

Teens can get involved as coaches and referees, and casually enter into mentoring and guiding roles. One 14-year-old at the Neighborhood Center, for example, began coaching 11- and 12-year olds in soccer. Soon, his group became so talented that they consistently beat all the other local kids—he is now taking them to meets with other city teens. This sort of individual initiative is encouraged by the relatively loose structure of this center.

Community Building

When the Beacon made the schoolyard safe, people began flooding in from the surrounding blocks to take advantage of it. Kixmiller says that hasn't hurt the program's emphasis on teens—rather, having a diverse group of people involved in the Beacon has improved it. He describes the Neighborhood Center as a community-building program rather than one limited to youth development, since the primary developmental task for youth at the Center is, as he says, "achieving responsible visibility". Being a responsible member in this context can mean everything from watching over children underfoot on the basketball court to controlling or defusing impulses to fight.

Peer Group Development

Youth CITs and Youth Council members have typically grown up together and sustained close relationships over a number of years. The Neighborhood Center allows an entirely new set of young people to join that peer group and to develop new informal peer groups through sports and other activities.

High Expectations and Clear Standards

There are clear standards of safety and behavior in the schoolyard during Neighborhood Center hours, and those principles are enforced by CFL staff, backed by local police officers when necessary. Adult staff members are role models who set the tone and enforce their expectations firmly.

Youth who join the CIT program must not just behave appropriately, but also are expected to assume some responsibility for the program's operations, to act as role models, go to school, and participate in the full range of CIT activities inside the Beacon. Center for Family Life fosters the ongoing education of young people by requiring that they finish high school and go on to postsecondary education, and by providing them with tuition grants and a penny pay increase for every college credit they earn.

Opportunities for Caring Relationships

Because the Neighborhood Center attracts a lot of adults and young adults, teens get a chance to interact with community residents in a way they wouldn't otherwise. They get a chance to see their own families in context and perspective, and to learn from adult patterns of interaction and social life.

Safety

The Beacon employs a security staff of four, with one guard stationed in the schoolyard. The entrance to the schoolyard furthest from the school is closed during Neighborhood Center hours to ensure that everyone who enters passes by staff members, and to encourage people to register and sign in. Staff and CITs are identifiable by photo identification cards.

While the safety of the schoolyard has made it attractive to hundreds of neighborhood residents, there are still significant risks. Gang members still congregate in the schoolyard, and are encouraged to come as long as they observe Neighborhood Center rules. Occasionally, fights still break out, and sometimes require police intervention.

ST. NICHOLAS NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION CORPORATION

Grand Street Beacon Literacy Peers/Literacy Staff

Eddie Calderon-Melendez started the Literacy Peers program in 1995 with the aim of preparing people to teach literacy skills and stimulate children to learn. He planned initially to train teenagers to become eligible for staff positions working with children in the Beacon's after school program. But in seeing the transformation that the Literacy Peers training program brought about in one young man, Calderon-Melendez realized that working at the Beacon provided young people with more than just job skills. He had inadvertently created a unique opportunity to reach them.

Literacy peer at work

Agency Description

"St Nick's" is a nonsectarian community development agency offering social services in the Williamsburg and Greenpoint neighborhoods of North Brooklyn. Founded in 1975 to improve housing conditions, the agency now provides everything from tenant assistance to economic and workforce development programs. St. Nick's opened a Beacon at Williamsburg's Grand Street Campus high school building in 1995 in order to provide more diverse services to neighborhood residents. Subsequently, the agency established another Beacon at Junior High School 126 in Greenpoint, and also launched the Union Street Family Center, which offers similar after-school and youth development services.

Young Literacy Peers and Beacon staffers work in a daily literacy-centered after-school child care and summer day camp program that draws 250 children.

General Program Description

St. Nick's youth development program trains adolescents to work with children and teach literacy skills. The program is focused around the "Literacy Peers" curriculum, which is taught twice a year to a group of 15 high school students.

The Beacon offers the same course to 24 teens each year in a six-week, five-day-a-week intensive summer version. St. Nick's has also offered a companion program, Art Peers, that trains young people to teach children in the arts. Both programs are supported by the Pinkerton Foundation.

Staff members work Monday to Friday from 2:00 pm to 6:30 pm, and on school vacations and during the summer from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. The Beacon is closed the first Friday of every month for staff development.

The benefits of training young people to teach children are well documented. At St. Nick's, however, the sophistication and range of the literacy program requires high-level training and skills. Young people that meet these requirements must have drive and strong support. "People are stunned that we have 16 year-olds doing this work," says Eddie Calderon-Melendez.



Who the Program Serves

Participants, who must be at least 14, typically come from one of the three high schools at the Grand Street Campus. After graduating

from Literacy Peers, teens of 14 and 15 are eligible for jobs in the Beacon office. Outstanding graduates over the age of 16 can be hired to work directly with children at the Beacon, supervised by another young adult of at least 18.

History of the Program's Development

When Calderon-Melendez took over the Grand Street Beacon in 1999, he

brought with him a literacy-centered after-school program that he had developed while heading a Beacon at the Phipps Community Development Corporation in the Bronx.

The literacy program at Phipps was launched primarily as a vehicle for training staff. At the time, Calderon-Melendez was more concerned with developing new employees than he was with comprehensive youth development. "The understanding of how it was a vehicle for youth development came later," he says. What caught his attention? Watching his former students apply their knowledge beyond the program.

One young man in particular showed him the program's potential. This young man had attended only half the classes and had not seem very engaged. But when he showed up at an outdoor literacy program, he was armed with materials and ideas, and proceeded to run a successful class. Calderon-Melendez says, "Understanding the potential for learning and growth in young people using this literacy-centered program model cast the Beacon's staff training process in a whole new light." Since then, youth development has been a core function of the Grand Street Beacon.

Structure

This Beacon is demanding and highly organized. Activities are

structured by staff-written lesson plans that break program time into 15-minute increments. Each weekday at the Beacon is specialized for a different approach to learning literacy:

- Monday: staff members introduce the book chosen for that week and read it aloud.
- Tuesday: the book is re-read, and students practice related vocabulary.
- Wednesday: reading comprehension activities.
- Thursday: arts and crafts related to the story.
- Friday: special projects.

A Home-Grown Mentor and Teacher

W

hen Charisse Johnson started

working for Calderon-Melendez as a Beacon after-school classroom counselor, she had no idea what she was in for. She was 20 years old, in her first year of college and just wanted a part-time job. A month into it, Calderon called her into his office and asked her to plan a small summer camp program in a local public housing project. As she did, the concepts underlying Calderon-Melendez's programs for children began to take hold. Eventually, spreading literacy skills became her primary professional goal. "I had worked in other after-school programs, but they were babysitting," she says. That fall, Johnson went back into the classroom at the Beacon. In addition to teaching literacy, she continued to develop new literacy-based curriculum. Eventually she became one of Calderon-Melendez's key staff people and a protégé as well.

Johnson says that fully understanding the concepts that underlie youth development took a few years. Before that, she saw what teens did at the Beacon as just a job. Now, she says that her experience at the Beacon was crucial to her own development as a young adult—she jokes that she is the resident guinea pig. Every time she accomplished one major professional task, Calderon-Melendez put a larger one right in front of her. "He's never allowed me to stay doing one thing," she says. Now she is the director of training and technical assistance, starting up a program that will train people nationally to use the Literacy Peers model. "It all started with a book and some ideas and an outstanding partner [Cesar Salcedo, now Beacon Director]. And just the development in myself."

But Johnson says this structured approach actually gives youth staff members a great deal of leeway. “They decide how and what they’re going to teach the children,” she says. “We give them the information and the resources to support what they’re doing.”

Program Elements

Literacy Peers. Youth trainees are taught the basics of literacy education, lesson planning, and learn a range of exercises for improving vocabulary and reading comprehension. They learn classroom management and how to work with children with special needs. As a final class project, each trainee plans an hour-long program centered around books they have selected.

Literacy Peers participants attend class once a week for nine weeks. For the tenth week, students teach a children’s class with two other Peers in an intensive weeklong session, under the supervision of a counselor or teacher. During the last two weeks of the class, students plan their individually designed literacy program. Stipends, typically from \$400 to \$850 (the maximum is \$1,000), are awarded based on performance. Some program graduates go on to work in the Beacon. Others have been hired in the education departments of institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Training Institute. St. Nick’s also runs a six-week daily summer Training Institute modeled on Literacy Peers. Youth learn the same skills as the Literacy Peers and also spend time working with children in the summer camp program.

Employment at the Grand Street Beacon. A number of Literacy Peers and Training Institute graduates work at the Grand Street Beacon. These young people become proficient teachers, role models for children, and good students. In addition to their teaching and school obligations, they also attend a weekly evening staff meeting and curriculum planning session. Twenty-five youth staffers work in the Beacon, 15 of them high school students and 10 college students. So far, ten of the 60 Literacy Peers graduates have joined the staff. Staff members are paid between \$8 and \$17 an hour to work 22 hours a week.

Younger teens may work in the office, helping with administrative tasks or acting as program assistants. Older teens can work with children as junior counselors, and those older than 18 can themselves become counselors and, eventually, supervisors. Senior staff picks the learning theme each semester, and youth staffers are given massive amounts of material to read and absorb so they can effectively teach it.



*Eddie Calderon-Melendez
Director, Family & Youth
Services*

The summer program is structured around themes. For example, in the summer 2001 “space” program, children read books about outer space, learned about the solar system, and did arts and crafts projects related to planets. For this segment, all teachers, counselors and assistants had to memorize the names and order of the planets and constellations.

Staff members are evaluated three times during the school year by their supervisors and twice during the summer. They must bring in their report cards for review, and are expected to meet at least three times a year with a Beacon staff social worker.

The summer program is structured around themes. For example, in the summer 2001 “space” program, children read books about outer space, learned about the solar system, and did arts and crafts projects related to planets. For this segment, all teachers, counselors and assistants had to memorize the names and order of the planets and constellations.

Staff members are evaluated three times during the school year by their supervisors and twice during the summer. They must bring in their report cards for review, and are expected to meet at least three times a year with a Beacon staff social worker.

At this Beacon, young staffers are the primary contact with children. They make choices about what and how to teach within the framework set out for them at the beginning of the course. If they remain on staff and graduate to a supervisory role, they play a more important role in developing curricula and choosing materials for classroom use.

Beacon Space

The Beacon is located at Williamsburg’s Grand Street Campus High School, which houses three separate high schools. Beacon activities are held in classrooms, the cafeteria, and the gym, and St. Nick’s staff also has office space in a large room in the school basement.

In What Ways is it a Youth Development Program?

St. Nicholas’ Beacon provides staffers and Literacy Peers members with concrete skills and a range of

opportunities to contribute, primarily by teaching literacy. Its

environment fosters ongoing staff support and a strong peer group of youth with similar interests and priorities.

Opportunities to Participate in Engaging Activities

Grand Street's after-school literacy program has well defined objectives. For both youth trainees and staff members, the model requires rigorous planning, critical thinking, and good organizational skills.

High Expectations and Clear Standards

Trainees are given incentives to do well such as the performance-based stipend and the opportunity to work towards a job. Staffers have clearly defined performance standards and regular evaluations. They must maintain a B average and are expected to plan for college. If a staff member's grades slump and do not recover, he or she is fired. Staffers say this is a strong incentive to keep up with schoolwork. At times, youth who have left the staff rejoined once their grades improved.

Opportunities for Caring Relationships

This program tends to attract motivated teens, who can then meet other like-minded young people, and connect with adults that will encourage them and help push them further.

Opportunities to Make a Contribution

Through these teaching programs, teens can stimulate learning and improve the academic performance of children. "Working here has changed how I relate to the children in my family," says staffer Yahira. "I understand their developmental needs, why they behave the way they behave, what they're trying to tell me... I know I'm helping my community, too." Teen staffers also mentor younger staff members and trainees.

Leadership Development

Having the chance to develop teaching skills, help other young people to learn, and take on increasing responsibility creates



Literacy peer teaching a class

strong leaders. Fredelyne, an 18-year-old staff member who is away at college but works at the Beacon summer camp, says this experience has stayed with her in her new life: "Many times in school where we interact and break down into groups . . . I'm a leader because I'm used to being a leader."

Skill Development

Youth trainees and teachers acquire a range of useful skills: planning, curriculum development, classroom and behavior management, public speaking, and teamwork. In addition, the obligation to keep up high grades in school ensures that these teens get the most out of their own education.



Literacy Peer tutoring

***Having the chance to
develop teaching
skills, help other young
people to learn, and
take on increasing
responsibility creates
strong leaders.***

THE VALLEY

Paul Robeson Leadership Program/Second Chance Youth Development Program

The Valley's staff always assumed that there were some young people in their programs who had been in trouble with the law. But most staff members did not ask questions. The agency prided itself on treating all youth with the same respect, not prying into the past, labeling or categorizing them. In the Robeson program, the agency's central youth leadership development program, young people make their own decisions about who to be and how to represent themselves, regardless of their history. In Robeson, says agency director John Bess, "You're not identified as a seventh grader, an eighth grader... There is no portfolio or profile. All those identifying points are dismissed."

Over time, however, the staff realized that some young people needed extra support and attention. This insight, backed up by conversations between Bess and the city probation commissioner, led to the creation of Second Chance, a program tailored for young men and women who have gotten into trouble with the law. The thinking behind Second Chance was that these participants would also become Robeson members, getting access to all the opportunities offered by the Beacon, and allowing them to redefine themselves. Whatever they might have done wrong in the past, this program would provide a second chance.

Agency Description

Bess founded The Valley in 1979 as a nonprofit organization focused on youth development. Over the years, the agency added a range of youth programs, including a Beacon, drop-out prevention, violence prevention, academic enrichment, and programs for pregnant and parenting teens. The Valley also now offers services designed to prevent children and youth from going into foster care. It operates programs in nine middle schools and high schools in Manhattan's Upper West Side and in Harlem.

General Program Description

Paul Robeson Leadership Development Program. The Robeson program helps young people acquire concrete, specific life skills to better negotiate everyday situations and develop into well-rounded adults.

Much of what Robeson teaches is designed to help young people judge social situations and interact appropriately, from job interview techniques to professional etiquette to learning how to defuse tense situations and have constructive debates. The core of this process is in "the circle"—the collective dialog that helps young people develop these skills.

Second Chance. At the Valley, staff have learned that young people who have broken the law and been through the criminal justice system—whether through an arrest, probation, juvenile detention or jail time—need extra help. In general, Beacon programs cannot offer much one-on-one staff time. All the Second Chance members, though, have a dedicated counselor who monitors their progress and keeps up with their lives. Rather than a separate program, Second Chance is mostly a way to earmark some of the Valley's young people as in need of special attention.

While Second Chance youth participate in other Valley programs, their activities center around the Robeson program. Staff members offer them additional encouragement but also observe the philosophy of the Valley, which holds that all young people deserve an equal chance at success.

Who the Program Serves

Robeson and Second Chance participants are mostly young men and women between 13 through 21, although some participate up to age 24. Most are African-American or Latino. Robeson generally has more than 100 members, 30 to 50 of whom show up on any given day. Second Chance has roughly 12 members at a time, some under court order to attend. Most are students at a high school or junior high affiliated with the Valley, but others go to school elsewhere and learn about the program through word-of-mouth. All live in poor New York City neighborhoods.



John Bess, President & CEO, The Valley, Inc.

History of the Program's Development

Paul Robeson Leadership Development Program. Bess

launched his agency after several years of activism and community work in Harlem. Youth leadership development was a priority. He began the Valley with a grant from the Cathedral of St. John the Divine to run an arts therapy program for local young people. As part of the program, Bess held three daylong leadership workshops in the summer of 1979. The workshops were hugely successful, attracting more than 300 young people, so Bess decided to maintain ongoing sessions at the cathedral. That was the start of the Paul Robeson Leadership Development Program. The sessions became increasingly popular, and in 1991 the Valley moved them to a larger room in the Wadleigh Beacon.

As the agency grew, Bess kept the Robeson program at the physical and figurative heart of the Valley. Director of programs Ed Scott says this ensured that Robeson was the core of the agency. "When it came to scholarships, good job opportunities, young people who came to Robesons got the first hit. It became the ticket to getting a lot of other things the agency had to offer," he says.

In 1995, Bess was still running Robeson himself, but it was becoming clear that as the agency's chief executive officer, he needed to pass the responsibility to someone else. Scott took over the program for a few years, proving that someone else could run it successfully. In 1999 he then transferred it to two former Robeson participants, James Reddick and Fisiwe Cook, who now facilitate and plan the program. Since both had effectively grown up along with the program, they had already absorbed its philosophy and perspective on youth leadership development.

Second Chance. In 1997, the staff approached the New York City Department of Probation (DOP) with the idea of creating a program for youth mandated to community service. DOP staff members came to observe Robeson, and they liked what they saw. The agency made a small grant to the Valley for the program, and set up a formal protocol to refer and track youth participants who would enroll as part of their probation or sentence.

DOP staff members hand-picked young people who they judged to be capable of benefiting from the program. "The idea [for DOP] was to catch them so that the rate of recidivism would be reduced through their contact with us," says Scott.

From the start, Valley staff agreed that Second Chance members would not be labeled as such. These young people would be treated just like the others, "mainstreaming" them. The main difference would be that they would get regular group and individual meetings with a staff member, who would keep a closer eye on them.

Within two years, Second Chance grew from 20 participants to 60, and the agency was able to raise private foundation money for support, including a grant from the Pinkerton Foundation. DOP staff continued to refer youths, and the Valley started its own outreach as well.

The approach worked. In the past four years, the agency has never once had to send a young person back to DOP for not completing mandatory hours. A few young people have started the program and then decided that it wasn't right for them. But these are the exception. Most of the teens that enroll in Second Chance finish the required hours, and then continue in the Robeson program.

Rasheena, who is now 16 years old, joined Second Chance as part of a community service sentence when she was 12. She says she liked the program well enough when she started, but didn't really connect to it until she was taken on a Robeson trip, where she got to know other members for the first time. When her mandatory community service hours were over, she stayed. "I did my time and kept coming because I liked it so much," she says.

Program Structure

Robeson. At Robeson meetings, members sit in a circle. Some meetings feature a special speaker

or presentation, but most follow a curriculum developed by the facilitators that includes units on leadership, relationships, college preparation, and preparing for the workplace. Young people learn about each topic through discussions, role-playing, guest speakers, and sometimes by watching and debating films or other media.

The aim is to create an environment for young people to learn by communicating constructively. John Bess says, “Young people hunger to talk and express themselves, hunger to hear what others have to say. They want to debate what other young people say, so they need settings where they can be safe, where they can be heard. On the street, no one helps you to deal with how you disagree. In Robesons, you can fight without being hurt.”

The curriculum has no formal beginning or end, except the summer break. New people can join at any time, which contributes to a sense of openness and to mentoring between older and newer members.

Second Chance. Program coordinator Phil Walker introduces young people to the program, explains it and helps them decide whether to join. Those who do meet with him regularly. Walker also tracks their participation in Robeson and other Beacon and Valley activities.

Program Elements | **Robeson.** The formal program is scheduled during two-hour sessions twice a week, and sometimes includes field trips and retreats as well.

Second Chance. Robeson activities make up the core of Second Chance, but these members also receive special staff attention, including individual and group meetings with the program coordinator.

Robeson. Two primary staff people design the curriculum and facilitate the group. Others act as co-facilitators. Every new Valley staffer is required to work as a co-facilitator at Robesons for at least 24 sessions to learn the agency’s approach to youth development. The program format is relatively flexible, and can accommodate staff fluctuations.

Second Chance. Phil Walker is this program’s full-time coordinator and liaison to DOP and probation officers. He recruits youth into the program and keeps track of their progress. For young people attending through a DOP sentence, Walker tracks their hours and monitors which Valley activities may count toward that obligation. Nonetheless, many youth—and even some staffers—don’t know that Walker is involved in probation guidance, in keeping with the philosophy that Second Chance participants should be able to blend in with other Valley youth.

Beacon Space

The Wadleigh Beacon is located in Harlem’s Wadleigh Junior High School on West 114th Street. The Robeson

program is held in a former gymnasium, and Second Chance is housed in other classrooms.

In What Ways is it a Youth Development Program?

Skill Development
Teens in the Robeson program learn to interact with and relate to a variety of people, from

friends to members of the opposite sex to potential employers. They also learn to speak in public, pick up business and formal language, and learn professional manners and etiquette. A few young people are also hired as “Youth Ambassadors” to teach a version of this leadership curriculum to middle school students at the Beacon. They develop other abilities: curriculum planning, working as a team, and learning how to mentor younger teens.

Opportunities to Participate in Engaging Activities

Being a Robeson member is itself engaging, but it also can lead to other valuable opportunities: jobs, whether in agency programs or Fortune 500 corporations; a chance to become a peer educator and trainer at the Valley or other nonprofits; and other valuable help with education and career contacts.

Opportunities for Caring Relationships

Relationships with staffers and peers are important at the Robeson program, especially for the teens in Second Chance. “A lot of times, because of their situation, they isolate themselves,” says Fisiwe Cook. But staff counter that tendency with a persistent message that these young people are important, loved and wanted. “The only magic formula we have is that we respect and love young people,” is how John Bess puts it. Staff members frequently point out that many of these young people have repeatedly been told that they aren’t capable, aren’t smart, and won’t succeed. Their job, as they see it, is to counteract that criticism.

Continuity of Supports

In general, staff members are expected to go the extra distance to make themselves available to young people. Staffer Sandino Sanchez says, “We do whatever it takes to help a young person. If they have trouble waking up in the morning, we’ll call them at 6 or 7 a.m., or someone will go to their house. We’ll bring them to class if that’s necessary.”

Peer Group Development

Joining Robeson really involves joining a peer group: the first step involves sitting in the circle and introducing yourself. The intention of Second Chance is to integrate its members into the strong, positive peer group at Robeson.

Leadership Development

Leadership development is the official goal of the Robeson program, but the term describes a range of activities. It means that teens absorb a set of skills and lessons and pass them on to the next generation. Some at the Valley say leadership is the ability to clearly and articulately express yourself in any situation, with anyone—a peer, a child, someone in a business suit. It can mean simply having the confidence to succeed in school, work, and relationships. “Once you're a leader, you don't do the old things you used to do,” says Second Choice member Maurice. “It takes away bad habits.”



Working together, The Valley

Teens in the Robeson

program learn to interact

with and relate to a variety

of people, from friends to

members of the opposite sex

to potential employers. They

also learn to speak in public,

master workplace manners

and etiquette.

BEACON SPORTS AND CAREER ASSOCIATION

Church Avenue Merchants Block Association

**Many young men stay
in touch after they
finish the course,
coming in for
help with résumés,
SAT prep workshops,
and other advice and
support.**

The Church Avenue Merchants Block Association, a multi-service nonprofit in Flatbush, Brooklyn, aids local businesses and helps residents find jobs. As a result, career and job skill development for teens is an important focus of the work at CAMBA. One of the agency's Beacon programs is especially geared toward young men who are avid basketball players, using their interest in the sport to engage them and help them develop, prepare for and reach career goals.

Few teenagers who play a lot of basketball end up as pros. When young men take the five-week job readiness course required for membership in the CAMBA Beacon Sports and Career Association, they learn that being a professional player is not the only career option. Through classes that teach résumé writing and job interview techniques, teens learn about sport-related careers in management, coaching, teaching, and other jobs. They also learn about the skills and degrees those careers require, how to choose and apply to colleges, and what grades and test scores are required to be accepted at community and four-year colleges. "If you go to college and get a degree, you can always find a career in sports," says Reginald Murray, the program's director.

Many young men stay in touch after they finish the course, coming in for help with résumés, SAT prep workshops, and other advice and support. Some also mentor and teach younger participants in the course. On Friday evenings after the end of the high school basketball season, the Beacon holds a "College Workout Night." Coaches from nearby colleges drop by to scout promising players. These conversations with coaches can provide talented players with incentive to stay in school and keep their grades up. Many of the program's grads are not yet old enough for college, but four young men from the program have now entered college—one with a full athletic scholarship.

GOOD SHEPHERD SERVICES

Women in Motion

The social service and youth development agency, Good Shepherd Services, offers families throughout New York City a comprehensive range of residential and community-based programs. Good Shepherd is especially active in Red Hook, Brooklyn, the neighborhood that hosts its Beacon.

The Women in Motion group at that Beacon draws in 15 young women each year with the promise of learning how to dance and perform in public. In addition to the creative and physical development made possible through the dance classes, the program helps group members build relationships with their peers, mature and assume responsibility.

Women in Motion meets twice a week. The first half of each session is reserved for a discussion of topics such as body image, women's roles, media messages, self-image, and lessons to be learned from successful adult women. Those discussions, combined with role-playing and the journal-keeping that are also part of the program, have several goals: fostering self-knowledge, understanding and improving relationships with family and community, building solidarity and a peer group, and developing and planning career and educational goals. During the session's second half, members learn dance, create and rehearse routines, and plan events such as a Beacon talent show.

Having a consistent group of young women at the Beacon has allowed Good Shepherd to draw in new young people. Women in Motion participants bring in their younger siblings, help recruit other local adolescents, and also participate in other Beacon activities, including job readiness, college preparation, and sports.

**Having a
consistent group
of young women at
the Beacon has
allowed Good
Shepherd to draw
in new young
people.**

PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH

Youth Learning Through the Arts

As local newspaper reporters, teens engage with the community by interviewing and writing about local politicians and community leaders. The paper includes articles about community events, advice columns and interviews.

Pathways for Youth, a youth development agency in the Bronx, operates a Beacon focused on learning through the arts. A Pinkerton Foundation grant allowed the agency to expand its offerings, bringing in professional artists to help young people create high-quality work.

In 10-week semesters of afterschool and Saturday classes, between 100 and 150 teenagers at this Beacon learn artistic and expressive activities, including newspaper publishing, singing, dancing, and producing a musical theatre revue, photography, filmmaking, literary criticism, creative writing, storytelling, and arts and crafts such as quilting, woodworking, and mask-making.

The Beacon's quarterly newspaper, aimed at a local audience of parents and teens, is reported, written, edited, printed, and distributed by youth. As local newspaper reporters, teens engage with the community by interviewing and writing about local politicians and community leaders. The paper includes articles about community events, advice columns, and interviews. It is professionally designed and printed with assistance from the Black Media Foundation, which sends working journalists to provide guidance in writing, editing and photography.

Amas Musical Theatre, a nonprofit organization based in midtown Manhattan, sends experienced professionals to work with teenagers at the Beacon, teaching performing arts and the history of Broadway theater. Those volunteers also help students produce scenes from various musicals as part of an annual performance. Beacon troupe members who stay involved for the full year end up on 42nd Street in the company's special month-long theater academy for New York City youth.

Through the Beacon, these young artists and performers acquire a range of skills, including improved reading and writing abilities, the ability to work well in groups, improved self-esteem, and a chance to discover and develop their talents. They also feel a sense of accomplishment.

PROJECT REACH YOUTH

Youth Council: A Youth Voice in Programming

Beacon Neighborhood Center

Project Reach Youth (PRY) offers educational, counseling and youth development services in four Brooklyn neighborhoods, including Fort Greene, where it operates a Beacon. The Youth Council provided PRY with a mechanism for youth to participate in the development and implementation of Beacon programs and activities.

In weekly evening meetings, the Council's 15 members plan Beacon events, including a Friday night film series, teen nights focused on games and sports, and special community events during holidays, including Halloween and Christmas. Council members poll children and teenage participants for ideas about events and activities at the Beacon. At events they have planned, Council members are responsible for managing all activities: signing in attendees, setting up equipment, patrolling for safety, making sure people obey Beacon rules, and refereeing sporting events.

The Youth Council also holds occasional workshops on issues such as job readiness, and recently published the Beacon's first newsletter as part of its writing group.

Every young person on the Council is also a staff member of the Beacon, working 10 hours a week for minimum wage. Participants are not paid for their time during Council meetings, but are paid for the time they spend setting up, managing, and cleaning up after events. Two Youth Council members are also the Beacon's DJs. A number of members also work as tutors in the after-school children's program and in a weekly Saturday math and reading enrichment course. As staff, they regularly attend staff meetings and help evaluate Beacon programs.

In weekly evening meetings, the Council's 15 members plan Beacon events, including a Friday night film series, teen nights focused on games and sports, and special community events during holidays, including Halloween and Christmas.

STANLEY ISAACS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

College Career Prep Program

Many teens interested in higher education don't look into college because they think it will be too expensive or because they are too busy working to help support their families. The CCP opens up options in higher education, so participants can see that going to college doesn't require abandoning other commitments and responsibilities.

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center is a multi-service settlement house located in a housing project in East Harlem. It serves both public housing tenants and residents of the local community. At its nearby Beacon, the College Career Prep (CCP) Program provides career and college assistance to teens between 13 and 17, offering a three-month, two-hour a week career and education preparation course, plus ongoing information and support.

The CCP course helps teens assess interests, improve work skills, and practice time management, interviewing, and résumé writing. Teens are hooked up with internships and part-time jobs, and learn about various vocational and apprenticeship programs. Many CCP participants also work two-day-a-week internships at the Beacon as tutors, office aides, and in programs for the elderly. Others take summer internships in large corporations. The combination of work readiness and work experience allows them to develop skills now with an eye toward the future. Teens also get exposure to working adults who serve as mentors and role models.

Many teens interested in higher education don't look into college prep because they think it will be too expensive or because they are too busy working to help support their families. The CCP opens up options in higher education, so participants can see that going to college doesn't require abandoning other commitments and responsibilities. The college preparation course includes a number of workshops and assessments to educate teens about the range of educational and vocational possibilities. They find out about different kinds of schools and options for attending college part-time, in evening classes, or as non-matriculated students. Teens also visit colleges and attend seminars at the Beacon with college representatives.

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center employs a full-time educational advisor at the CCP. Teens meet with her individually and have access to information she has collected on jobs, schools, scholarships, and financial aid. The agency also awards 10 college scholarships annually to youth in its own programs, providing an additional incentive to come to the CCP for information and assistance.

UNITED ACTIVITIES UNLIMITED, INC.

Engaging Young Women: Teen Group

For United Activities Unlimited, Inc. (UAU), a youth development agency in the Staten Island's New Brighton neighborhood, figuring out a way to interest young women in Beacon programs was a challenge. In response, UAU created a program to offer young women tangible, immediate skills and also help them plan for the future.

While UAU primarily planned to provide career development opportunities and connections to post-secondary education, its staff found that these young women were more interested in developing skills that would help them find work. In response, the program hired a sewing instructor. She was able to engage 15 young women (and a few young men) by teaching them concrete skills—participants were making hats and scarves after the first class.

The sewing classes were used to build discipline and focus, techniques useful in future careers and academic pursuits. The occasional fashion show at the Beacon also gives the young women a place to show off their creations to the community and their families.

Having found a way to get young women into the Beacon, UAU then engaged them in other activities. In addition to sewing classes three times a week, this teen group offers:

- Group and individual counseling aimed at helping girls develop future goals and plans for reaching those goals
- Aerobics class once a week
- Dance class once a week
- Group trips to college fairs and workplaces.

The sewing classes were used to build discipline and focus, useful in future careers and academic pursuits. The occasional fashion show at the Beacon also gives the young women a place to show off their creations to the community and their families.

About the
FUND FOR THE
CITY OF NEW YORK

The Fund for the City of New York was initiated by the Ford Foundation in 1968 with the goal of improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. The Fund assists in the implementation of programs, practice, policy, and technology to advance nonprofit organization and government functioning.

Board of Directors

Matina Horner, Ph.D.

Chair

Michael J. O'Neill

Vice Chair

Abraham Biderman

Allen Boston

Geoffrey Canada

Robert A. Caro

Robert Curvin

Sally B. Hernández-Piñero

Robert G. M. Keating

John M. B. O'Connor

Judith Shapiro

Daniel Yankelovich

Mary McCormick

President

Barbara J. Cohen

Peter Kleinbard

Alfonso Wyatt

Vice Presidents

Agencies participating in the Pinkerton Project:

Alianza Dominicana

Center for Family Life

Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA)

Good Shepherd Services

Pathways for Youth

Project Reach Youth

St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center

The Valley Incorporated

United Activities Unlimited

Documented by:

Suri Duitch

Edited by:

Kat McGowan

Ten Programs for Teens was produced through a grant from ***The Pinkerton Foundation***

About the THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE of the Fund for the City of New York

YDI assists youth practitioners, locally and nationally, to build their skills and knowledge in youth development. This work is interdisciplinary and addresses youth employment, education, after-school and non-school hour programs. YDI engages youth workers from these and other fields in sharing and developing their ideas. YDI conducts training, provides organizational support, facilitates networks of youth workers, and raises and distributes funds to support special programs. YDI has also worked with the City University of New York to create a college course that provides 12 college credits and a certificate for youth workers. YDI's publications on youth development are widely distributed among government, funders and others to support their work in youth. YDI receives support from a wide number of private funders including:

The Altman Foundation	The William T. Grant Foundation
The Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.	The John A. Hartford Foundation, Inc.
The Booth Ferris Foundation	The Charles Hayden Foundation
The Louis Calder Foundation	The William H. Hearst Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation	WB11 Fund/McCormick Tribune
The Citibank Community Fund	The New York Community Trust
The Citizens Committee for NYC	Open Society Institute
The Clark Foundation	The Philanthropic Collaborative
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation	The Pinkerton Foundation
The Ford Foundation	The Daniel & Joanna Rose Fund
National Funding Collaborative for Violence Prevention	The Vivendi Universal Fund
The Bernard & Alva Gimbel Foundation	The Wallace Reader's Digest Funds

Peter Kleinbard
Vice President and Director

Jessica Mates
Deputy Director

Kimberley Cambridge
Director, Beacons Technical Assistance

Sandra Escamilla
Program Officer, Beacons Technical Assistance

Ashaki Williams
Project Assistant

The Youth Development Institute (YDI), one of three units of the Fund, seeks to improve the capacity of communities to support the development of young people. At the core of YDI's work is a research-based framework for youth development. This framework identifies the type of experiences that have been found to be present when young people, especially those with great obstacles in their lives, achieve successful adulthood. These guiding principles are: close relationships with caring adults, high expectations, engaging activities, youth participation and continuity of supports. YDI applies these principles through technical assistance, research, training and other activities. YDI assists public and private policymakers to increase resources and to develop programs and policies that support young people.

Alianza Dominicana

Youth Leadership Programming at La Plaza Cultural
JHS 143
515 West 182nd Street
New York, NY 11236

Center for Family Life

Beacon Neighborhood Center
P.S. 314
330 59th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11210

St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation

Grand Street Beacon Literacy Peers/Literacy Staff
Grand Street Campus
850 Grand Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211

The Valley Incorporated

Paul Robeson Leadership Program/Second Chance Youth Development Program
IS 88
215 West 114th Street
New York, NY 10026

Church Avenue Merchants Block Association

Beacon Sports and Career Association
PS 269
1957 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11210

Good Shepherd Services

Women in Motion
PS 15
71 Sullivan Street
Brooklyn, NY 11207

Pathways for Youth

Youth Learning Through the Arts
IS 148
3630 Third Avenue
Bronx, NY 10456

Project Reach Youth

Youth Council: A Youth Voice in Programming
JHS 265
101 Park Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11205

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center

College Career Prep Program
PS 198
1700 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10128

United Activities Unlimited

Engaging Young Women: Teen Group
IS 49
101 Warren Street
Staten Island, NY 10304

For more information:

Fund for the City of New York
Youth Development Institute
121 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10013
tel (212) 925-6675
fax (212) 925-5675
www.fcny.org