

Faith In Action Continued...

Replication Partners

First and foremost we are thankful for those foundations who have partnered with us in this endeavor, launching Beck into a new chapter of development. September 2014 was the beginning of three years of substantial support from an anonymous foundation to build the Institute's capacity for continued model refinement, adaptation and promotion. We are also grateful to the added support from the Healey Family Foundation, Kathleen & Brian MacLean, Catholic Charities and another anonymous gift from a Westchester family foundation. It is rewarding to be able to report on the development of new program and training resources, with expanded support for quality programming as well as continued research to support replication.

Re-entry Programs: Meeting the Need

Recent presentations to re-entry task forces in Westchester and Poughkeepsie were encouraging as justice officials expressed their support for Coming Home Programs based on the EOP/LSEP Model. There is a growing need to provide different community experiences for those returning from prison to these communities. Reducing recidivism is a national priority that invites collaborations with faith-based institutions that offer the kind of evidence that the Coming Home programs are building. Recidivism in many communities across the U.S. is over 60%, and in New York State 42%. The push for evidence-based and evidence-informed programs drives the search for possible solutions to this national challenge. Coming Home Programs offer a solution through the renewing experience of community with trauma-informed cognitive-behavioral fundamentals, basic to healing and development as a foundation for new lives as contributing citizens.

Domestic Violence Programs: "What Works"

One in three women experience domestic violence. Living Well Programs are an important LSEP adaptation for domestic violence survivors that demonstrate how the faith community can play a significant role in meeting the needs of this vulnerable population.

In October, the Beck Learning Collaborative presented to the Westchester community creative efforts that resulted in exceptional outcomes for domestic violence survivors. (See Page 5) Presentations starred Living Well program coordinator and facilitators Sue Groman from Poughkeepsie in collaboration with the First Congregational United Church of Christ and Michelle Nickens from Metro Baptist Church in Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen area.

Guides to Trauma Recovery

The **Sanctuary Institute**, based on the pioneering work of Dr. Sandra Bloom, provided a week-long leadership training led by Sarah Yanosy in October, that increased our understanding of trauma. In June, program leadership and staff benefited from working with Joe Foderaro, a co-creator with Dr. Bloom in developing the S.E.L.F. curriculum. As a psycho-educational program for growth and healing, it is now widely used to support trauma recovery.

The strong similarities between the S.E.L.F. evidence informed interventions and the work of the EOP/LSEP curriculum are striking. As Joe Foderaro pointed out – "our shared DNA has many parallels", including with his current community-based work in Philadelphia with Drexel University's Center for Nonviolence & Social Justice, "Healing Hurt People". We are working on web-based ways to bring this information to all who are involved: mentors, interns, and other volunteers who provide important contributions to support participants' growth and development.

Research Guides Program Quality

Solid program outcomes from four years of Beck's evaluation of over 40 program cycles supported a newly developed *Best Practices Manual*.

A sustainability study, completed in July 2014, has provided the agenda for on-going programs. Key findings include the need for: integration of programs with their organizational sponsors, the important role of marketing and communication, collaboration with the broader community, and program evaluation.

On-going Research by Beck Research Fellows:

Linda Woodbine examines the role spirituality has on the participants' outcomes; and Patricia Dawson focuses on how programs develop and are sustained. Each will significantly contribute to our progress as we develop a replicable program model.

Findings From the Capacity Building Phase.

The take-home message from our program evaluations: Community is an important foundation for successful transitions supporting healing and growth. The community experience also is transformative for those who work with program participants.

The Impact on the Faith Community:

- ⇒ Staff, volunteers and congregants expressed how the programs had afforded an understanding of participants' life journeys that moved them from judgement and separation to caring and connection.
- ⇒ For those involved, a space opened fostering deeper communication and reparation.
- ⇒ Witnessing participants strides inspired new collaborations to "live one's faith".
- ⇒ Congregants increased involvement in social justice activities.

The Learning Collaborative Partners

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York
 Empire College, Staten Island
 First Congregational United Church of Christ, Poughkeepsie
 First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn
 Housing Plus Solutions, Brooklyn
 Interfaith Assembly for Homelessness and Housing, NYC
 Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries/Metro Baptist, Manhattan

Rye Presbyterian Church, Rye NY
 St. John's Lutheran Church, Manhattan
 The Reformed Church of Bronxville
 The Riverside Church, Manhattan
 Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie
 West End Presbyterian Church, Manhattan
 Xavier Mission, Manhattan

25 Years and Going Strong! *By Anne Teicher*

George Horton, Director of Social and Community Development at New York Catholic Charities, along with Marc Greenberg, Director of Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, are the fathers of the Education Outreach Program (EOP), the model for all subsequent LSEP programs. **In recognition of the 25th year of EOP and of the completion of their 51st program** serving homeless men and women, Beck asked George to reflect on what the program has meant to him and all those involved. George observed that since he and the program participants come from such different backgrounds, he initially wondered how to bridge the gap between them so that they could know each other “in the way that God intended us to know each other.” He started life with the advantages of a stable, loving family that provided for his needs, while many of the participants experienced the traumas of poverty, abuse, abandonment and chaos.

Sharing his spiritual perspective, he spoke to the concept of “accompaniment” which means “walking with the people you are serving. In that capacity we learn together and grow together connecting with each other’s humanity. There is no us and them.” The group members listen, hear and take care of each other. They heal through their relationships telling their stories and sharing in each other’s journeys.

The program evolved from the first overnight vigil of homeless people in City Hall Park and the desire of George, Marc Greenberg and Sister Ann Murray to help them to tell their stories in their own voice so that officials and others could hear them. The three brainstormed that such a program should include story-telling, guidance and support by mentors, and the teaching of life skills. They decided to embed these elements in a community setting where participants would play the leading role, with a staff supportive of their voices.

The program evolved over the years, adding a social worker to address the issues that prevented participants from moving beyond homelessness. Eighteen years ago, Alison Hughes-Kelsick, a Masters level social worker, joined the staff. Known affectionately as “Miss K” to generations of participants, Alison goes that extra mile to help them with hurdles of housing applications, shelter, family reunification, benefits, medical and legal issues. She also supervises Fordham’s social work interns and brings creative approaches to issues such as dealing with trauma and loss. In doing so, she helps participants understand what has happened to them and how to manage their emotions about these events.

The 500+ graduates over the last 25 years have expanded and enriched the EOP community and its progeny programs. Participants

have become leaders, facilitators, mentors and public speakers. The family of LSEP programs provides opportunities for graduates to give back to the community by helping others restore their lives, giving them a sense of efficacy and the knowledge that they are fully participating citizens.

George cited his appreciation for the support, research and training that Fordham and the Beck Institute has provided because of the perspective it gives on what the programs are doing, why they work and how they can be improved. He is grateful to the many graduates, mentors and program presenters. A special thanks is due to Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, who recognized EOP’s value, has supported it and also taught, via *Education for Justice*, that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God and deserving of respect. Finally, he thanks Pope Francis for reminding the church and its people of the tenet of “accompaniment,” and encouraging them to go out to the people so that they and the church will grow.

Of the many EOP graduates who have returned to provide service to EOP and other programs we wish to make special mention of: James Addison, mentor for EOP, facilitator for Riverside, presenter for EOP & Riverside; and Dennis Barton, presenter and facilitator for Panim, and mentor for EOP.

Going Strong: 2013-2014 Evaluation Highlights Evidence from 18 Program Cycles

Evidence Supports Model Replication

- ⇒ **Significant improvements in coping and life management** were maintained at 6-month follow-up, contributing to a critical foundation for meeting goals and continued challenges.
- ⇒ The majority of participants demonstrated a **decrease in trauma symptoms to below clinical levels of PTSD**.
- ⇒ A major finding showed that trauma levels, social support, feeling connected to community, and use of spirituality to cope accounted for more than half of the improvements in coping/life management scores. ***This, in addition to high participant satisfaction with all program components (average 4.5/5) contributed further support for program replication.***
- ⇒ High graduation rates as a result of consistent program participation demonstrates effective engagement of individuals who still struggle with life’s basic requirements: housing, jobs, safety, education, community.

The Impact on the Participant: Central Themes

- ⇒ The importance of experiencing affirmation and forgiveness that encouraged self-acceptance.
- ⇒ New ways of viewing their lives. Participants discovered what happened to them through telling their stories, as others showed understanding. They are not alone.
- ⇒ Through working together they gained a new understanding of blame, guilt and shame; they became liberated to find their voice and to take up the role of citizen.
- ⇒ Some described overcoming life adversity as pure grace – a rediscovery of their humanness and other’s humanity.
- ⇒ The majority report better self-confidence and improved ability for self-care which is significant considering more than half had physical and mental health concerns.

Collaboration Strengthens Community

Collaboration Grows Community

New collaborations between the programs, neighboring congregations, social services and volunteers enhanced curriculums and provided connections for ongoing support as described below:

Living Well/Union Theological Seminary:

Thanks to Living Well's Director, Michelle Nickens, who is a field instructor at Union, the connection was mutually impactful. While Union students brought body-healing rituals to Living Well's women, these domestic violence survivors gave seminarians, future pastors and spiritual leaders, a first-hand glimpse of the often-hidden toll of such abuse on women and children during a shared meal with the Black Student Caucus.

Coming Home/ Eight Riverside Church Ministries/Community Services:

Collaborations with eight church ministries contributed to the richness and variety of offerings, trainings and support for 11 post-incarcerated men and women. Important links with community services created new pathways for housing, education and jobs.

LSTEP/Dr. Anita Ravi: Participants at Xavier Mission received first-class medical advice. Dr. Ravi, a long-time program contributor of Riverside Coming Home, commuted from Philadelphia for the health sessions. She was a program highlight, answering emphatically and knowledgeably the many questions of people who have lacked access to good health care for most of their lives.

HomeComing/Veteran's Administration - Military Resilience Project, Urban Justice:

Thank you to Simnia Singer Sayada who developed these connections. The homeless vets at Metro Baptist Church benefited from meeting with program reps and the VA's Program for Black Veterans, learning about a continuum of services and support such as assis-

tance in dealing with complicated discharges.

Panim el Panim/West End Presbyterian Church/Romemu Reform Synagogue:

Closer relationship with West End and with the in-house Synagogue, resulted in meals and conversations between congregation members and participants. Participant Walter said, "I felt so welcomed and the home-cooked meals fulfilled a deep need as did the discussions about spirituality, something I lost on my journey." Relationships with a Hindu Temple in New Jersey, a Mosque and a Sudanese store owner also brought new foods and discussions. Marion, who organized the Presbyterian women, said "Most of us have known difficulties as well and the experience of helping these men and women helps us to renew our own faith."

The Reformed Church of Bronxville (RCB) /Family Services of Westchester (FSW):

A new collaboration began between RCB and FSW for this year's Coming Home program for women recently released from the county jail. The new Coming Home Coordinator, Janet Donat, with a Westchester Community Foundation grant with FSW to support incarcerated mothers, was enthusiastic about this partnership. These mothers were in critical need of a re-entry program as few resources were available to them to rebuild their lives. "The synergy has been wonderful! Together, we have been able to provide comprehensive services and support to these incredible women." (See Page 6 for advocacy at the program.)

St. John's Lutheran Church/Empire College/Catholic Charities:

14 youth have completed 3 cycles, including a pilot of the LSEP program, Living Proud for homeless youth. Life stories were expressed in words, poems, videos, and musicals at graduation. All of the youth accomplished at least one of their goals: saving money, safe housing, obtaining a job, obtaining job training or internships and managing family relationships.

Mentors Matter

Mentors are a key component of the original program created by Catholic Charities emphasizing the human connection. This spring 60 men and women mentored with many having made this commitment for years and first-timers are looking forward to doing it again in the fall.

Beck Institute provides training and a manual to support mentors. Mentors also bring their own wealth of experience, talents and wisdom to enrich their mentoring relationship as well as the community of mentors and participants.

Three mentors talk about why they choose to mentor:

Doug Mastin, a mentor for Panim for six years: "I do it because it is not acceptable to me that 58,000 people are homeless on our streets each night; I started volunteering to see if I could help at least one person at a time." Years ago, Doug joined a group at his church that focused on listening with an open heart and without judgement. In his relationship with Frank (see p. 2) he did just that.

Robert Baer, a veteran and a retired lawyer who spent part of his legal career working in jails, volunteers at the Home-Coming program for homeless vets. For him "mentoring is a fitting sequel to being a soldier. We listen, we learn, we help and we pray for the success of our brothers and sisters as if it were our own success."

Annie Troy, a Living Well mentor, not only spent time with her mentee outside of the six sessions, but also provided office space and assigned tasks to another participant who wanted to brush up on her office skills. Annie, who also provided the program with a great resource guide, observed that she had changed profoundly as a result of the mentoring.

Creative Innovations

As the programs mature, staff and interns develop increasingly creative and effective ways of educating and engaging participants. Some of the ideas involve assisting the programs to become more self-sustaining as described below.

- ⇒ **Public Speaking.** At Xavier Mission, intern Prescott Loveland, who just graduated from Fordham with a law degree and an MSW, ran a session for participants on public speaking, a skill that will enable them to tell their own stories and to advocate for justice and for better services for themselves and their peers.
- ⇒ **Story-telling options.** Participants at The Riverside Church's Coming Home (CH) program received a camera to photograph his or her experiences, environment and dreams. In recognition that not everyone communicates best in words or in English, a slideshow was displayed at graduation.
- ⇒ **Participants show culinary talents.** Potluck dinners and special celebration dinners were created by Riverside CH participants with a highlight celebration for their social work intern, Sabrina Johnson's, MSW graduation.
- ⇒ **Boutique night.** Generous donations of clothing, shoes and accessories were made by Eileen Fisher as well as congregants and community members. Strawberries and flutes of sparkling cider were served to all as volunteer personal shoppers assisted our participants to select clothing and accompanying accessories. Volunteers are inspired to continue this tradition.
- ⇒ **Art for healing.** Other programs are also using art as a different way for people to understand and express their lives: a volunteer at Panim el Panim took participants to art galleries to see stories told in art. A participant in that program wrote her story in Poetry; sessions at other programs involve drawing and collage, and at Metro Baptist's Living Well, as at other programs, rituals represented consistency and became part of the healing process. Living Well women also drew on their gospel heritage to sing prayers and songs, most poignantly during the graduation ceremony, when they sang a Hebrew prayer, 'God, heal her please' as they lit candles of hope.
- ⇒ **A Gala Cabaret.** As programs seek increased sustainability, a gala cabaret was the brain child of members of Metro Baptist Church, many of whom are part of the neighboring theater community. All seats were sold and Living Well participants joined a full and enthusiastic crowd gathered in the sanctuary to hear and see singing, dancing, music and hilarious comedy acts for the benefit of their program. Delicious food and sorbet punch were the perfect final touches and \$3,000 was raised to help sustain Living Well.
- ⇒ **Mindfulness.** This practice has been found to have a major impact on people suffering from trauma and stress as well as on the staff who work with them. Simnia Singer Sayada, former coordinator of Metro Baptist HomeComing, developed a curriculum that included mindfulness practices that are being adopted in all of the LSEP programs. Mindfulness exercises include body scans, breath awareness, breath-centered meditation, body stretch movement and gratitude journals.
- ⇒ **Healing with Horses.** The Poughkeepsie Living Well women and their children spent the day working with horses at the Lucky Orphan Horse Rescue. According to the EAGALA model each person has the skills to heal within themselves. The sensitive and non-judgmental characteristics of the horse enables those who have felt particularly disconnected because of their traumatic experiences to gain self-awareness, relational awareness and inner strength which helps to heal. The women shared with us that they felt that they had been given an 'out of the box' method for thinking about their lives and a few even reported that they now have healthier relationships with their children.
- ⇒ **TMI Project.** The leaders of TMI Project worked with Poughkeepsie Living Well participants for 6 weeks, mining and crafting their stories. TMI methodology replaces shame and stigma with self-esteem and pride by extracting deeply buried stories and guiding participants to tell them boldly in public spaces. Each participant read their piece from the steps of the church pulpit. The audience of 50 remarked: "each story was so powerful!". This shared experience of telling and hearing stories of trauma and victory has had a positive lasting impact on all involved.
- ⇒ **SoulCollage®.** As a trained facilitator of SoulCollage®, Judith Knauss a mentor for Living Well Poughkeepsie, offered her time to facilitate a transformative experience. The practice encourages self-exploration while fostering an extraordinary sense of community during the making and exploration of cards in a group setting. The participants and their mentors were invited to create a vision of their future selves on cards that became works of art. The end result was the creation of a collaged card representing their vision of their whole/healed self, leading to better self-understanding and a deeper sense of connection to what matters.

Participants Meet Goals & Make Their Voices Heard

6 month post-program reunion—91 participants reported

⇒ 30% attained a job	⇒ 31% reached a financial goal
⇒ 16.5% obtained an internship	⇒ 24% reached a housing goal
⇒ 31% reached an educational goal	⇒ 98% remained substance free

“To heal you must learn something - To stay healed you must pass it on.”

As participants begin to understand trauma, learn about its impact on them and others, and start to heal, they are becoming empowered advocates, joining together to use their voices to challenge the conditions that injured them in the first place.

In each program cycle participants express the desire to give back. Many volunteer in food programs and shelters, others take up causes born of their own experiences. It is admirable to witness their determined efforts to make a difference. It is transformative to be a part of the solution through the act of advocacy. This spring we applauded participants' efforts highlighted below.

- ⇒ **Walk-A-Thon for Postpartum Depression.** The formerly-incarcerated women at the Reformed Church of Bronxville walked to raise awareness of post-partum depression, a condition suffered by a peer that had resulted in her being jailed.
- ⇒ **Advocacy honored.** When their peer facilitator/MSW intern, Alexandra Pierre, was honored by Hudson Link for her criminal justice and anti-poverty reform advocacy, participants attended the ceremony at the Grand Hyatt along with staff, mentors and members of the congregation. Reformed Church of Bronxville generously purchased the tickets for all of the participants and team leaders.
- ⇒ **Women call for justice against domestic violence.** Living Well women from Metro-Baptist describe the impact of interpersonal violence on women and children to future pastors and congregational leaders in the course of their collaboration with Union Theological Seminary.
- ⇒ **NYC AIDS Walk.** Participants in the L-STEP program at Xavier Mission joined with congregation and staff to walk in support of some of their members, wearing T-shirts designed by an MSW intern/peer facilitator, Prescott Loveland. These participants also educated the congregants at Xavier Mission by sharing their experiences before and after joining the program.
- ⇒ **Mentor and a graduate speak in front of 500.** In May, a Riverside Church Sunday Service was introduced to the stories of the spring graduating Coming Home class.
- ⇒ **Graduating class received blessing at Xavier's Mission Mass.** An L-STEP graduate shared her story demonstrating how the program changed her life.



L-STEP Participant & Mentors - Aids Walk 2015



Trauma-Informed Programming

By Suzanne Wiedel-Pace, LMSW

Sanctuary's S.E.L.F Model® for healing trauma has four central concepts for coping and recovery: Safety, Emotions, Loss, and Future. S.E.L.F. is a non-linear method for addressing, in simple words, very complex challenges. Program staff are beginning to use this framework to help participants in a variety of ways so that they will have a shared language that helps them move beyond what has happened to them.

Participating in community that emphasizes responsibility and empowered ownership for learning and recovery involves story-telling, developing and working on goals, and respecting and responding to each other. These all are core elements of EOP/LSEP programs; they are also integral to the S.E.L.F. model, Sanctuary's trauma philosophy.

2013-2014 data from 18 program cycles indicates that the majority of program participants suffer from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or can be diagnosed with PTSD. More than half of these participants were post-incarcerated, a third survived domestic violence and ten percent were veterans. We are encouraged by the reduced symptoms reported post-program and at the six month reunion data collections. A statistically significant decrease was noted in participants Post Traumatic Checklist Scores, with a 4-7 point change which, for the majority, held over time. For most this reduction in symptoms was evident in increased coping.

(*See P. 8 for link to full research report.)

Participants have learned to recognize their symptoms as PTSD, and how this severely compromises a person's ability to learn, hold a job or maintain healthy relationships. As we become increasingly aware of how seriously trauma has affected the lives of participants, Beck's relationship with the Sanctuary Institute has given staff additional guides to support program development. New ways were discovered on how to share with participants the neurological impact of trauma on the brain as highlighted in program examples and Frank's story. His journey of recovery within the safety of a community makes it possible to express and feel emotions.

Riverside's Coming Home, MSW intern Sabrina Johnson created a session with the moving film, "Healing Neen." to help participants understand the impact of trauma, and how to take care of their emotional well-being.

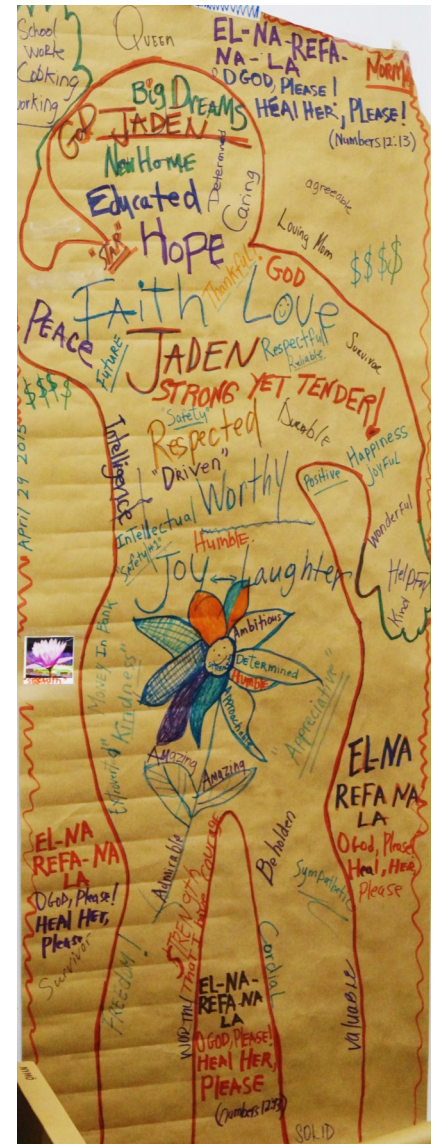
L-STEP at Xavier Mission, Cassandra Agredo created a power-point presentation that described the many factors that play into trauma, such as the Flight/Fight/Freeze reaction, to increase awareness of why this happens and presented options for new ways to cope with this pattern.

The Reformed Church of Bronxville, Dr. Jim Walkup provided a 5-week extra hour before programming to explore recovery from trauma that influenced participants' behavior before and while they were in jail.

Living Well, a program for domestic violence survivors at Metro Baptist Church, in collaboration with Union Theological Seminary, used ritual to help women understand their traumatic pasts, describe them within the supportive community, and move towards the future.

A Participant's Story of Healing:

Frank arrived at Panim el Panim at the West End Presbyterian Church, broken, unable to remain in the present and suffering severe panic attacks that lost him jobs. As he bonded with participants in the Panim community, he finally felt safe enough to tell his story. Born in Ghana, Frank was abused and enslaved and at age 13, he escaped alone to the US, 'seeking God', he said. Bad experiences piled up, finally made worse by drugs and alcohol; his wife's family had him deported to Africa where he spent many years that included 7 months in a Congolese jail before he got back to New York. Frank talked and wrote, pages and pages, and cried frequently, flooded by emotions he hadn't been able to endure before without reenacting the traumas. With the help of the community, the staff and particularly his mentor, he was finally able to mourn appropriately the losses the traumas had caused—education, jobs, love, self-worth. By the time the program was over, Frank had two part time jobs and some hope for the future despite the issues that remain.



Living Well 2015- "Envisioning our Healed Future"

An example of trauma-informed art that tells the story of a survivor's recovery. Her original story has been transformed with hope, worthy, home, laughter, joy, freedom, and includes the comments of her peers.

(Used by permission)



The Beck Institute

Fordham University Graduate
School of Social Service
400 Westchester Avenue
West Harrison, NY 10604

Phone 914-367-3436; lightburn@fordham.edu

**Full Report of Program Evaluation
2013/2014 will be posted at
www.fordham.edu/beck**

The Bertram M. Beck Institute on Religion and Poverty is an ecumenical institute that partners with New York City interfaith religious and lay leaders who are moved to alleviate poverty in our affluent society. We are committed to preparing leaders who promote social justice and serve the poor.

The Beck Team: Anita Lightburn, Project Director; Amanda Sisselman, Director of Program Evaluation; Anne Teicher and Vincenza Corcoran- Project Consultant/Capacity Builder; Sue Groman, Program Manager; Angela Belsole, Grants and Special Projects Officer. Doctoral students: Erica Ponteen, Donald Garner, ABD; Linda Woodbine, ABD; Deborah Mullin, ABD; Patricia Dawson, ABD; Jennifer Hili, ABD; and AnneMarie Norberto. Program researchers: Dawn Ravella, Alexandra Pierre.

Summer 2015

Page 8



Student and Staff Contributions



Fordham social work students are and have been integral to the success of the EOP/LSEP, bringing creativity, a variety of personal life-experiences and a desire to learn and contribute. Nine Fordham MSW students and an MSW intern from Lehman College had opportunities to integrate their academic learnings with the reality of the field, where they worked with the multitude of issues that disenfranchised and traumatized people face. Two students reflect on their internships:

Travis Jackson, who brought experience with the criminal justice system as well as a certificate in ministry to Panim el Panim, wrote: *I believed the participants/clients were easy to connect with because we shared many similarities. Insightful, due to the variety of problems the individual participants presented, exclusive of their shared dilemma of homelessness. As an intern pursuing a clinical practice career, I was placed in an environment that allowed me to realize the importance and relevance of my classroom content. The idea of community, and its value as a supportive therapeutic environment was experienced, as strangers bonded and developed trust to disclose intimate facts about themselves. Such exposure by such a vulnerable group evidenced the spirit of community to me.*

Prescott Loveland at Xavier Mission's L-STEP who combined legal studies with social work, observed that he learned valuable lessons about how homelessness exacerbates the many other problems our participants face. *"I learned that group/community contact can make a big difference especially when supplemented by mentors and case managers. I witnessed participants humbly stepping across differences in age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, educational background and upbringing in community. They reached across these barriers to care for one another, modeling the way we all should live. As their co-facilitator I, too, was inspired by the L-STEP participants. I, too, was empowered by their resolve and their love for one another. I am reminded that any social work program that empowers those in need must have numerous components -- as L-STEP does -- but community building is perhaps the most important. Community is a foundation of empowerment. As I embark on my career, I am grateful for this reminder."*

Special Recognition: We celebrate the achievement of Darryl Butler, a graduate of the first co-ed Coming Home Program at the Reformed Church of Bronxville who now is a 2015 Fordham MSW graduate. Darryl, who was a Fordham Children First Scholar, led the Benediction for his class graduation at Avery Fisher Hall this May. He will continue to inspire and provide leadership as we seek his involvement in developing the Coming Home Programs.

Graduates Return in Leadership Roles: Sue Groman, LMSW, is back after completing her MSW from Fordham in 2013. Her tenure at Fordham included three years as a Beck Research Assistant – playing a major role in the development of the manuals that guide current programs. Sue provided leadership in Poughkeepsie, as a Living Well Coordinator last year, and now is seeding new programs as part of her role as Beck's Program Manager. We also welcome Rachel Johnson, once a Fordham MSW intern at Xavier, now MSW graduate, and most recently a creative Coordinator and Facilitator at Xavier Mission. In August, Rachel will bring her talents and wealth of experience to her new role leading the programs at Xavier Mission, Riverside and Metro Baptist. Sabrina Johnson, new Fordham MSW, will return to the site of her internship as program facilitator for Riverside's Coming Home Program. Shirin Nassi, now an MSW, was a Panim intern who is continuing as the program coordinator for the youth program: Living Proud. Solange Delmar, a 2012 Fordham MSW, returned to HomeComing as lead facilitator.

Moving On: On another note, we sadly say goodbye to Hope Eisdorfer, who has been the Program Director for the Xavier Mission L-STEP and Riverside Church's Coming Home Program for the past two years. Hope's Fordham MSW internship was at Riverside where she made an exceptional contribution in developing their new program in 2012-2013, continuing as the program's first Director the following year. Each successive year of the Coming Home Program has become more central to the Riverside Community thanks to Hope's gift for collaboration.

We also sadly say goodbye to Siminia Singer Sayada, MSW who developed, coordinated and facilitated the HomeComing program at Metro Baptist Church. She made a major contribution to the curriculum for Veterans as well as to the Best Practices Manual this past year in her role as research consultant to Beck. She now lives in Ithaca, NY with her husband and her baby daughter Mina Aviv Scher born 4/21/15. A word from Siminia, who we all miss! *"Goodbye and thank you to everyone who has and continues to serve those most in need of love and support."* We look forward to your beginning a new HomeComing program in Ithaca!