

Program Development Highlights

NYC Program Development Highlights

EOP

George Horton, Director of the Department of Social and Community Development

After 25 years of providing the Educational Outreach Program twice a year, Catholic Charities celebrated their 49th program cycle under the leadership of George Horton and Alison Hughes Kelsick. The significant success of these programs at Catholic Charities has provided support and aid to persons in transition while being a model for other programs to follow that has resulted in the adaptations of the Life Skills Empowerment Programs for the post incarcerated, survivors of domestic violence, and veterans. The Beck Institute presented “Supporting People in Transition: an Overview of Developments and Outcomes” to the senior staff of Catholic Charities, to review findings from the New York Community Trust Study which included the EOP program, emphasizing the positive outcome of our collaboration.

Present at this May 1, 2014 meeting were: Dr. Anita Lightburn, Dr. Amanda Sisselman, and Dean Debra McPhee, Fordham GSS; Catholic Charities senior staff Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director, Joseph Buttigieg, Associate Executive Director, George Horton, and Alison Hughes Kelsick MSW; and Fordham GSS intern Argelia Moya and other Catholic Charities staff who have contributed to the EOP program.

The presentation updated Catholic Charities senior staff on the work the Beck Institute has provided including research and program support for EOP/Life Skills programs this academic year, now replicated in 10 locations for 18 cycles. The Beck Institute provided research results for their study of program demographics, the high rate of program satisfaction, the effect on trauma symptoms, and participant outcomes. The deep experience of program participants of family, trust, and community building were highlighted. The next steps for Catholic Charities and other LSEP programs are to include refining the program model to inculcate greater awareness of and response to trauma as well as opportunities for program graduate follow-up and community capacity building. The fruitful presentation allowed for exploration of current program modifications, new program opportunities, and future program additions for Catholic Charities LSEP that is promising for youth leaving foster care.

Metro Baptist

This year Living Well and Home Coming have found a permanent, accommodating space at Metro Baptist Church’s lively and welcoming community. In 1984, Metro Baptist acquired the building at 410 W. 40th St. and immediately began providing for the direct needs of the community. The church’s outreach efforts were modeled after the father of the social gospel, the Rev. Walter Rauschenbusch, the early-20th-century theologian, social reformer and Baptist minister whose New York City church was located just three blocks from where Metro sits today. Metro Baptist is committed to the social gospel and meeting the needs of the community. Pastor Tiffany Henkel states of the early years at Metro, “Every Saturday they would make a big pot of soup and go across the street to the park to feed the homeless people. They were building relationships.” In addition to their home cooked food program that supports evening dinners, access to childcare has been a valued support. Pastor Henkel has been an enthusiastic advocate, engaging the Metro congregation, who have joined in program graduations, inspired by the transformations they have seen in participants. Their ongoing support will provide resources and volunteers that will continue programs this upcoming fall and next spring. Metro Baptist staff Michelle Nickens and Simnia Singer Sayada are important contributors to the Beck Learning Collaborative. Marc Greenberg of the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing (IAHH) partners with Metro as they develop necessary program supports. Going forward, Pastor Henkel is interested in becoming more involved in expanding the programs, developing partnerships with community congregations, and increasing the involvement of the church community.

West End Presbyterian Church

Panim El Panim has also found a new home for their program at the West End Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. Current Pastor Reverend Alistair Drummond has joined with Marc Greenberg of IAHH in developing this congregational collaboration. Rev. Drummond has encouraged his congregation to embrace the program and participants as part of their community ministry. There is an ongoing effort to develop a West-Side collaboration with other congregations to support fall and spring programs to meet the needs of men and women in homeless shelters. Elaine Gerald and Dennis Barton, program coordinators and facilitators, have been an active part of the Beck Learning Collaborative engaged in all capacity building activities. This year’s Panim programs, supported in part by funding from the Collegiate Church, have thrived at West End Presbyterian. We look forward to the developing community collaborations that will sustain this important program on the upper west-side of Manhattan.

Living Proud

The Beck Institute, through the leadership of Dr. Amanda Sisselman, with funding from the Achelis Foundation and Empire College, has supported the adaptation of the LSEP program to meet the needs of homeless LGBT youth. A partnership with the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing (IAHH) and St. John’s Lutheran Church in NYC to serve LGBT homeless youth has resulted in a summer pilot program to meet the needs of this underserved population. Based on a needs assessment comprised of discussions with current providers and a focus group with homeless youth, an adaptation of the LSEP model are in place. A program meets twice weekly, with a meal at each session, as well as a transportation stipend. Youth will be provided

with one-to-one mentoring through volunteers in the community. As an integral part of the LSEP model, youth will tell their personal stories through creative arts venues. The youth will share their artistic life-story pieces at a gallery night, open to the public at the end of the program. Life skills sessions include a wide variety of topics such as basic budgeting, grocery shopping, accessing mental health services, and learning how to manage emotions in difficult situations. A team of students from the Staten Island unit of Empire State College works with this program in the West Village providing program material development and administrative support. Looking ahead, this modified LSEP pilot for LGBT homeless youth will inspire new program opportunities for communities to support at-risk youth.

Hudson Valley Program Development Highlights

LEAP

Capacity building work with Beck supported an adaptation and evaluation of the LSEP model to develop leadership in Yonkers. Dr. Dawn Ravella, MSW, Director of Mission Outreach at the Reformed Church of Bronxville, has successfully launched the Leadership Empowerment Action Program (LEAP) in 2013. The LEAP program is part of an ongoing commitment from the Reformed Church of Bronxville (RCB) to partner with community members and leaders of the Nodine Hill section in Yonkers to organize and revitalize the area. The individuals, families, and community of Nodine Hill have been afflicted by serious short and long term consequences of incarceration, poverty, and a chaotic neighborhood beset by violence. LEAP is a 24 session program offered to Nodine Hill residents to develop leadership and life skills, as well as unite and uphold community organizing in the area. LEAP sessions follow the distinct LSEP model including mentors from RCB congregants, with adaptations to develop leadership. A graduation event celebrated the first LEAP class of 11 women and men, who also worked together with RCB congregants on public policy advocacy for gun control. Collaborative efforts between the Reformed Church of Bronxville congregants and leadership, Nodine Hill residents and leadership, non-profit supportive agencies, and public entities have resulted in a focused effort to create and sustain lasting systemic change.

Ossining

The Breaking the Chains program in Ossining began planning approximately two years ago with a group of local citizens interested in developing a reentry program for the post-incarcerated. With gathered community supports and resources in place, the pilot was completed this past fall of 2013. Breaking the Chains of the Past was made possible with the help of clergy and members of several congregations, representatives of civic organizations and community groups and agencies, local and county officials, interested citizens, and formerly incarcerated persons now working in reentry. Thanks to the welcoming support of the former pastor, Rev. Lynda Clements and the First Presbyterian Church of Ossining, Breaking the Chains had a home during the fifteen-week program. Almost all dinners for participants were prepared and served by members of local congregations. Other program collaborators included Pearl Peterson; Bob Berson, Leader of the Ethical Society of Northern Westchester; and Hans Hallundbaek, Prison Partnership Coordinator of Hudson River Presbytery.

Poughkeepsie: Fostering a Community of Hope

Vincenza Corcoran MS, LCSW

As a capacity builder for the Poughkeepsie Living Well program serving domestic violence survivors, I have had the privilege of experiencing what it is to be in community and watch hope grow. Over the past 17 weeks of the first program cycle, I have witnessed an empowering shift in the lives of the Living Well program participants as well as all others who are involved in the program through the power of inclusion.

Entering the church hall that hosts the program on any given night, your senses would be invigorated with the colors of the rainbow. Pastel covers line the tables, beautiful dishes are set inviting all to share in the evening, energizing clatter emanates from the kitchen as the dinner buffet is being prepared, volunteers bustle back and forth as food is joyfully served, adults delight in the children as they blow bubbles playing freely in the relaxed atmosphere, and laughter, conversation, and sweet music fills this sacred space. This is when the program starts; the moment in which staff, volunteers, mentors, students, participants, and children participate in the magic. Courageous and empowered, a member stands and reads an inspiring quote, prayer, or poem that has personal meaning deeply touching listeners. Others sitting at the table then take turns sharing a word that describes their current state of being, reaffirming this is a safe space cared for by all.

“Creating a community together” was the vision of Sue Groman, the coordinator of the Living Well program. A seasoned social worker, Sue has cultivated strong leadership skills required to engage the Poughkeepsie community and build partnerships necessary for the program’s continued success. Sue’s bold direction and perseverance to initiate a different domestic (DV) program in the Hudson Valley built a collaboration effort including local residents, Hudson Valley groups, non-profit agencies, DV shelters, and government entities. When asked what is different about the Living Well program in Poughkeepsie, participants respond with a number of uplifting personal examples. One participant shares, “When I first came in I wanted to run out of the room but the meal helped me stay. Also no one has ever asked me what I want from a program and what my strengths are. I have been grouped out for 20 years. This program is different.”