

DOING JUSTICE

WINTER/SPRING 2008

CEP CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY



Former CEP directors Max Blake, Althea Brooks, Rae Linefsky, Gina Lambert, JoAnne Page, and Oren Root, and current director Joe McLaughlin are honored for their years of service.

“I couldn’t be happier,” said CASES’ CEO Joel Copperman, reflecting on the CEP 40th anniversary party. Despite blustery winds and a near freezing temperature, over 200 current and former staff, judges, attorneys, government representatives, and non-profit colleagues attended the January event to honor current and former CEP directors. “It was a wonderful evening and a great opportunity for those who have meant so much to CEP over the years to reconnect with the program and with each other,” said Copperman.

The Court Employment Project (CEP) was created in 1967 by the Vera

Institute of Justice as the country’s first pretrial diversion program. After operating for several years as a demonstration project at Vera, CEP was incorporated as an independent non-profit, which it remained until it became a part of CASES in 1989. Today, the program operates as an alternative-to-incarceration program for teenagers and young adults, serving close to 400 participants each year. CEP offers case management and counseling, education and employment services, arts programming, and a variety of other activities aimed at engaging young people productively with adults and peers, building their

intellectual and social competencies, and helping them set and achieve positive goals for their futures.

The theme of helping people to help themselves was well-represented by the many non-profits who contributed to making the January 24th event an unforgettable evening. Comfort Foods, a Project Renewal program that employs formerly homeless adults, provided food and staffing. Greyston Bakery in Yonkers, another model social enterprise company operated by the Greyston Foundation, provided the 40th anniversary cake. The talents of these and other agencies were seamlessly coordinated with the help of Cause Effective, a non-profit event planning and resource development agency, whose help with the party was made possible by a grant from the United Way of New York City.

The centerpiece of the evening was the presentation of awards to CEP directors representing the last four decades. Each received a plaque containing a detail of a mural created by CEP teacher and artist Nathaniel Quinn, who also curated many of the displays on view that evening. The presentation ceremony featured remarks by Joel Copperman, CEP Director Joe McLaughlin, and keynote speaker Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College and former CASES

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trustee. While Travis and Copperman reflected on CEP’s pioneering place in the justice system, McLaughlin spoke about CEP’s plans for the future. In particular, he touched on a number of collaborations—with Brooklyn Treatment Court, Youth Represent, the Children’s Movement for Creative Education, and others—that have broadened the program’s reach and enriched services for participants. McLaughlin also recognized the ten-year anniversary of CEP’s award-winning internship program, Career Exploration, towards which donations made that evening were directed.

The event took place in the historic Clock Tower Office Building where CEP has operated for more than fifteen years. Photographs and memorabilia dating back to the program’s earliest years

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CASES AND IVY LEAGUE TUTORS: A PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS

Through a new partnership with the Ivy League Tutors Foundation (ILTF), a local nonprofit organization that connects public school students with tutors from top-tier colleges and univer-



Ivy League Tutor Ariel Akselrad explains a tough concept to a CEP participant.

sities, CASES has expanded education services for participants in the Court Employment Project (CEP). The tutors are the most recent addition to CEP’s education unit, which also offers GED and pre-GED instruction, GED testing, education counseling and school liaison services.

The tutors are making a significant

impact on CEP students, says Gabriel Dattatreyan, CEP’s Supervisor of Teaching Services: “One of my aims over the last two years has been to provide comprehensive academic assistance to all of the participants who are placed in our unit. Partnering with ILTF allows us to provide one-on-one tutoring on the brink of taking the GED exam or the SAT’s. Their focused attention has benefited twenty or more students, and has directly contributed to nine students passing the GED exam and two students receiving high enough scores on the SAT to apply to the colleges of their choice.”

Tutors not only work individually with students, but also provide valuable support in the classroom. The wide variety of skill levels among CEP participants presents a challenge to CEP teachers in their efforts to make lessons engaging and accessible to all students. With the assistance of ILTF tutors, classes break off into skill-based groups for targeted instruction.



Ivy League Tutors Foundation founder Ryan Chang.

In addition to assisting with core academic subjects, last semester tutor Tony Flohr partnered with CEP teacher Daniel Stageman to offer an eight-week creative writing seminar. The class culminated in an essay contest and the publication of a booklet comprised of staff and student writings. Ryan Chang, the founder of ILTF, shares CASES’ belief in the potential of fine arts classes to motivate students: “Arts like creative writing are addicting,” he explains. “Students who learn to write short stories and personal memoirs are likely to keep writing after the course ends.

As a mode of critical thinking, a tool for self-analysis, and a coping strategy, writing is unique among academic subjects in that it constitutes a way of thinking rather than a way of knowing.”

Helping young adults to pursue their education goals has significant effects on individuals and communities. Recent research by the Department of Education studies have shown that high school graduates and GED-earners have significantly higher lifetime earnings than high school dropouts. Furthermore, court-involved individuals who obtain diplomas are significantly less likely to reenter the justice system. ILTF tutor Ariel Akselrad sums up the benefits of the CASES-ILTF partnership, saying, “The most rewarding aspect of my work with the CASES program is the opportunity to help the participants feel smart and worthy of everything the world has to offer—to give them not only the requisite math or science skills, but the skills necessary to get excited about life and the prospect of moving forward.” **C**

INTEGRATING EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION FOR YOUTH: LEARNING TO WORK

In September 2006, CASES joined a citywide initiative to create new education and workforce development services for some of New York City's most at-risk youth: those who have fallen behind in school and are unlikely to ever receive a high school diploma. A 2005 study commissioned by the City's Department of Education (DOE), found that nearly 140,000 youth age 16 to 21 were at least two years off-track academically. The study also showed that only 19% of these students, described as overage and under-credited, ever graduate from high school. To better meet the needs of overage and under-credited students, the DOE has partnered with 37 schools and youth-serving agencies to create Learning to Work programs that combine education classes with job-readiness training and paid internships. By offering employment training and the opportunity to earn an income alongside academic instruction, Learning to Work increases the incentive for these youth to remain engaged with education.

FOCUS ON EMPLOYERS

LTW interns are placed with diverse employers across the city. The program works closely with participants and internship providers to find placements that best fit the individual needs of each intern and employer. Program staff maintain regular contact with interns and providers for the duration of each internship and provide additional support as needed. Recently, LTW interns have worked at the Bronx Athletic Leagues as coaches' assistants, at Biscuits and Bath as animal caregivers, at the Fortune Society and Allied Insurance as administrative assistants and, at CASES, assisting in the Human Resources Department and in the Brooklyn Treatment Readiness Program.

Internship Coordinator Deanna Fei describes the appreciation internship providers have expressed regarding their interns: "They are very grateful for the help, especially nonprofits. Many employers have explained how they've been given the opportunity to undertake projects that they don't usually have the time to take on. And many have expressed interest in hiring interns for permanent positions. One supervisor actually wanted to bring his intern to his new job at another firm."

Since its inception, CASES' GED/Learning to Work Program has served more than 150 such youth and continues to develop ways to increase student engagement. "We've gained a very good understanding of our students and the larger purpose of the program," says program director Tonica George. "We use different styles to engage different students, and we're flexible about scheduling for students who are working or raising families." Another factor in the program's success is a school culture in which both work and education are part of the students' shared experience. "Staff really promote the internships," Ms. George explains, "and students talk about them as others get more involved. Interns wear their work clothes to class and other students notice, and realize 'Wow, I could be getting paid.'"


In order to be eligible for internships, students must complete a series of work-readiness seminars that explore personal, interpersonal, and professional skills necessary for success in the workplace, including professional conduct, conflict resolution, self-image, and inter-

personal communication; workshop participants also learn to write resumes and participate in mock employment interviews. Much of the seminar curriculum is based on another CASES program, the award-winning Career Exploration, which offers job-training and internships to court-involved youth. CASES' long experience running Career Exploration, now in its tenth year, has been invaluable during the early phases of Learning to Work and, according to Ms. George, the adapted curriculum is extremely successful with her participants.

AN INTERNSHIP STORY

BA started the GED/LTW program in October of 2007, at first only interested in earning his GED. However, when he learned about the Learning to Work internships he was instantly attracted to the idea: "They announced it in Town Hall one day and I was interested, so I took the opportunity and I took the chance." BA successfully completed the seminars required for internship participation and was hired as a dog-handler at Biscuits and Bath on Manhattan's Upper East Side. BA is grateful for the focus and direction his internship provides. "I wasn't doing anything at the time," he says, "It's better than wasting time on the streets." BA is enjoying his internship so much that he talked another student, AH, into the working toward an internship as well. "He wasn't sure if he wanted to do it," BA recalls, "so I explained everything to him. I told him he should get an internship, that it would help him a lot, and so he did it. I told him you got to put the work in, but it's worth it." AH, having taken the advice of BA, has recently been placed as an IT Assistant at Cornell University Cooperative Extension in midtown Manhattan.

Another component of the program that students find inspiring are the periodic workshops where they meet with professionals from diverse fields, who share their career experiences, answer student questions about their jobs and workplaces, and describe the steps in their professional development. "We invite speakers on different career paths, who have backgrounds the students can relate to," Ms. George explains. Speakers have included a member of the DA's office who earned his GED after being involved in the justice system, and a former Community Prep student who earned his GED and began a successful career in construction.

Learning to Work is one of five programs CASES operates for young people. Although LTW—unlike the others—does not exclusively serve court-involved individuals, participants in all the programs share many of the same challenges, including school instability, low credit-earning, and other obstacles to education. LTW offers these young people the opportunity to reengage with education and receive extra support while also earning an income and gaining job skills. Joe McLaughlin, CASES' Director of Youth Programs, views the initiative as a valuable resource for graduates from other CASES' youth programs. "When kids successfully complete our six-month alternative-to-incarceration," explains Mr. McLaughlin, "we have the option to send them to our LTW or one of the other LTW programs around the city to continue pursuing education and employment. This is a great opportunity for our graduates. They've earned it." 

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greeted guests as they arrived. And, throughout the evening, shouts of recognition and embraces between friends and former colleagues contributed to an atmosphere many said felt like a family reunion. As soft music




Judge Jo Ann Ferdinand chats with CEO Joel Copperman and CASES Trustee Ben Tucker.

spilled out of a back room where a live jazz trio played, guests eagerly pored over the walls of artwork created by current CEP participants. Prints, paintings, photographs, papier mache, and tile work covered nearly every free space, along with descriptions of the art classes in which each work was created. Jessica Zapotechne, CEP's art therapist, was especially moved by the volume and breadth of the artwork on display. "[The arts] are incredibly important to the work that our participants do while they are at CASES," said Zapotechne. "Seeing their work showcased at the party gave me great pride in their achievements and in my role as someone who can facilitate positive changes in their lives."



CASES Trustee Lee Wood looks on at awards ceremony.

According to Copperman, seeing so many people who have shaped the program under one roof affected him in a similar way. In particular, the presence of the current Board chair and all of the former chairs of CASES and CEP was a moving tribute to the importance of this program. Also, said Copperman, he was touched, although not surprised, that so many former CEP staff braved the bad weather to show their support: "[CEP staff] have a special connection to this place—they share a passion for the work. Many have started their careers here, and many have gone on to make important contributions in the field." The event's organizing committee is already making plans to ensure that former staff have more opportunities to remain connected to the agency and the program. Several party guests reached after the event said that they would welcome this chance: "I had a great time," recalls Elisa Ruppel, who worked for CEP as a court representative from 2002 to 2004. "It was wonderful reconnecting with old friends and colleagues and hearing about what's currently happening in CEP. It's easy to forget about all the good work that CASES does when you're not there every day. The party was the perfect reminder." 

TRANSITIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT: MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE MENTALLY ILL

It is estimated that mental illness affects between 10 and 16 percent of the jail population in the United States. Due to the chronic instability that serious mental illness typically causes, these individuals are also more likely than other inmates to have been unemployed or homeless. Despite their high needs, people with mental illness who are sentenced to very short jail stays in New York City often don't remain in the system long enough to receive treatment. To help address this service gap, CASES' newest program, Transitional Case Management (TCM) serves individuals with mental illness charged with misdemeanors in Manhattan Criminal Court.


Directed by Dr. Allison Upton, the program identifies individuals with serious mental illness and connects them to comprehensive case management services in the community. CASES' prior success serving this population demonstrates that the majority of these individuals (nearly 70 percent) will take advantage of voluntary services if given the

opportunity. Dr. Upton finds that her TCM clients are highly motivated to improve their quality of life. "It's very rewarding to help people reach their goals," says Dr. Upton. "The people that we're working with have substantial needs—not just in terms of mental illness, but around housing, medical issues, substance abuse treatment... and what we find is that when we put the necessary supports in place, people are able to break the cycle of incarceration and stay out of the system."

TCM STAKEHOLDER AGENCIES

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Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator
Office of the Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services
New York County District Attorney's Office
New York City Criminal Justice Agency
Manhattan Criminal Court Judiciary
CASES
Legal Aid Society
Bronx Mental Health Court
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies
Center for Court Innovation
Bowery Residents Committee
National Alliance on Mental Illness
New York County Assisted Outpatient Treatment

CASES' TCM program is supported by the City and a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant to the Departments of Correction and Health and Mental Hygiene. The primary purpose of the BJA grant is to bring together a coalition of stakeholders in order to improve outcomes for defendants with mental illness in New York City's Criminal Courts. Under the direction of Sarah Gallagher, Executive Director of Discharge Planning for the Department of Correction, collaboration partners include court officials, representatives from government agencies, and directors of nonprofit organizations (see inset).

The stakeholders group met on February 4 to discuss the TCM launch and the ways that the collaboration partners could assist in ensuring that the program fulfills its promise. The group formed subcommittees that will explore the effect of current criminal justice policies on defendants with mental illness and their access to needed services, particularly housing. Dr. Upton is excited about the potential of the collaboration. "This is a tremendous resource," she says. "We're lucky to have experts in the field coming together with policymakers in this way to support the work of the program, to continue to investigate how we can best serve this population." 

If you are interested in learning more about CASES' programs, please visit our website: WWW.CASES.ORG.

To add your name to our mailing list, contact Hannah Palmer-Strann at (212) 553-6309 or send an e-mail to hpalmer-strann@cases.org.

Tax-deductible donations to CASES can be mailed to: 346 Broadway, 3 West; New York, NY 10013. To ensure your gift is handled promptly, please write "Development" or "Joel Copperman" on the envelope. Thank you in advance for your support.

LETTER FROM THE CEO

Last year, a twenty-year-old man was sentenced to CASES' Day Custody Program (DCP) in lieu of serving a short jail sentence on Rikers Island. Like many of the young men in our programs, he was a frequent marijuana user and a high school dropout. Among the many factors complicating his young life, the one he found hardest to admit to our staff was the fact that he couldn't read. After completing DCP classes and community service, CASES connected him with a community-based program for counseling and follow-up. His DCP case manager kept in touch and, several months later, we learned from the community program that he was now enrolled in GED classes. This man's turnaround is typical of the hundreds of clients we serve each year.

CASES' Day Custody Program is part of the Discharge Planning Collaboration, a larger initiative in New York City to address the diverse problems related to incarceration. Efforts that involve over a dozen City agencies and numerous non-profits have resulted in many new programs, serving different groups of individuals who have committed crimes and need a real opportunity and caring assistance to turn the corner on crime. DCP was one of the programs highlighted in the keynote address presented by Mayor Bloomberg to the U.S. Conference of Mayors at the recent Summit on Reentry and Employment. As the Mayor pointed out, DCP and other programs like it are changing the face of criminal justice in New York by offering court-involved individuals the services that enable them to rebuild their lives and remain crime-free, productive members of society.

Contrast the New York City experience with recent findings by the Pew Center on the States. The Pew study shows that, for the first time in history, one in every 100 adults in the United States is in jail or prison. For men between 20 and 34, one in 34 is behind bars. For black men in that age group, a startling one in nine is incarcerated. While national recidivism remains the same, spending on corrections has increased over the last 20 years by 127 percent when adjusted for 2007 dollars. (Spending on higher education rose by 21 percent during that time period.)

New York is leading the way for the nation here. It's time for us to invest more resources in services that improve lives, instead of steel bars and concrete walls.

JOEL COPPERMAN

If you are interested in employing an LTW intern, hiring a program graduate, or have other questions about Learning to Work, please contact:

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