

Changing Lives



GOODBYE DENIM:

Program readies teens for college and beyond

It's 5 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon in East Harlem—a group of high school students are gathered around a cafeteria-style table in a brightly decorated classroom.

At first glance, it seems like a standard after-school hang—the chatter is filled with stories, playful teasing and laughter.

But this is not your average social gathering. The boys sport freshly pressed shirts and ties—while the girls wear dress pants, skirts and low heels. Jeans, the staple of every teen's wardrobe, are nowhere to be found.

"After today you guys are going to hate me," says a middle-aged woman with a thick Caribbean accent as she assumes a commanding position at the head of the table and invites students to the front one-by-one to evaluate their



DRESSED TO IMPRESS EVERY WEEK, UYL STUDENTS BREAK OUT THEIR NICEST OUTFITS FOR DRESS-FOR-SUCCESS WEDNESDAY.

outfits. "Is this right for a job interview?" she asks the group.

The kids get into it right away, pointing out things like, "Your pants are too low," or, "I would hire her!"

The instructor's comments are more nuanced. "A lot of people are going to want that job," she says. "You have to present yourself well to get it."

Hello future

Dress for success days are just one aspect of The Salvation Army's Urban Youth Leadership program (UYL)—which was started in 1995 to give low-income, minority high school students a better shot at getting into college and making it in the workforce.

The nearly 100 teens who take part in UYL, which has six sites throughout New York City, attend weekly workshops on subjects like interview skills, financial aid, and college essay writing.

"Many of them live in poverty-stricken locations," said UYL Director Sherrie Walker. "So they are not getting that help in their schools."

In addition to attending discussions, UYL participants mentor children in The Salvation Army's Greater Academic Incentives to Nurture Success (GAINS)

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A MESSAGE FROM DIVISIONAL COMMANDER MAJOR GUY D. KLEMANSKI

Ask a child that age-old question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” and you will get an ambitious response such as pastor, firefighter, or even president.



Unfortunately, the forces that shape a child’s future can be beyond their control.

A family’s income—whether they can afford to pay for a good babysitter, art classes or college—makes a

difference. So too can lack of a role model who helps with homework and values education.

Every day, thanks to the generosity of donors and the compassion of staff, The Salvation Army Greater New York Division’s comprehensive youth programming can also make a difference.

Whether it’s a three-year-old learning numbers in day care, a child finding a permanent home through foster care and adoption, or a teen taking refuge in safe, drug-free drop-in centers—in Salvation Army locations throughout the greater New York region, young people with the odds stacked against them are getting a chance.

In this youth-service themed edition of *Changing Lives*, you will meet some of these youngsters, who dream about achieving more than is expected, and learn about the adults working hard to make their dreams come true.

I hope you will find inspiration in the stories of these remarkable individuals.

Blessings to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy D. Klemanski".

Major Guy D. Klemanski



DOING THE
MOST GOOD™

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after school program every weekday afternoon for an hourly wage paid by the city—and quickly revoked if GPAs fall below a certain level.

The program’s multifaceted approach yields a variety of benefits: students discover a new-found sense of responsibility as they strive to be good role models for their mentees; and they are much more likely to graduate from high school and go to college than the peers they grew up with.

In the 2006–2007 school year, of the UYL students who were seniors, 98 percent graduated from high school and 80 percent enrolled in college—impressive figures considering that the program operates in neighborhoods where large portions of adults never earned high school diplomas.

From Kingston, Jamaica to king of the class

Ricardo Tailer is a clean-cut seventeen-year-old with a gentle demeanor and a smooth Jamaican accent. When he immigrated to New York in 2005, he found all sorts of differences to adjust to: the fast pace, the pollution, a new school.

“I was dumbfounded just looking at the kids the first day,” Tailer said. “Just trying to say: okay what are these kids like? It was frightening at first.”

In the end, Tailer’s new classmates accepted him right away—they liked to joke with him about Bob Marley, Sean Paul and other Jamaican celebrities. But it was UYL, not friends from school, that helped him find his place in this country.

Even as a young boy, Tailer always dreamed of college. Although, he can’t say where that dream came from. No one in his immediate family went. No one in his family was familiar with the

American college application process either—including himself.

Tailer found the answers he needed through UYL. Now, only a junior, he's learned how to write a college essay and apply for financial aid—something he'll definitely need. He's also taken the SATs and enrolled in classes at a local community college.

"I think this program is very important," Tailer said of UYL, citing not only its college-prep component but the merits of having somewhere for kids to go after school.

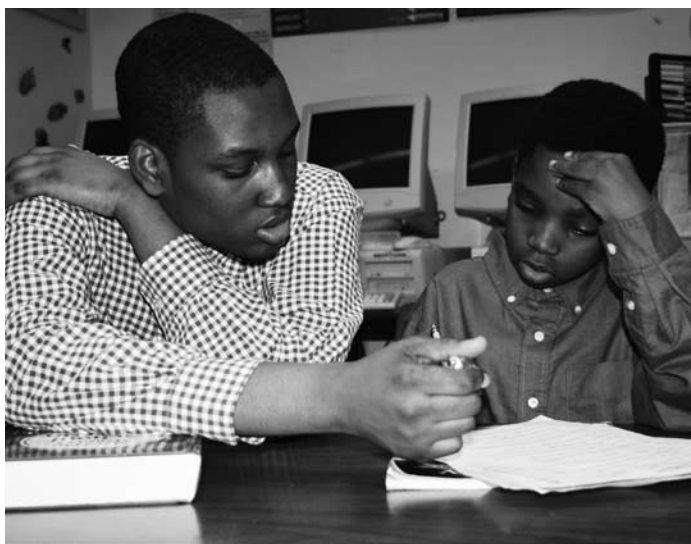
▶ NEW YORK CITY
NINTH GRADERS
HAVE ONLY A 37
PERCENT CHANCE
OF ENROLLING IN
COLLEGE.

—2006 study by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

Many of Tailer's friends who aren't in a similar program are struggling. "Some of them smoke, drink and party a lot," he said. "Some of them are not going to graduate next year because they don't have enough credits. They



ABOVE, GROUP THINK UYL LEADERS GATHER FOR A WORKSHOP.



LEFT, LIKE A BIG BROTHER RICARDO TAILER OFFERS HOMEWORK HELP.

don't have the sense in them that is like, 'I could get it done.'"

A program like UYL can remedy that self-doubt, according to Tailer. For

his part, he's certainly found his "yes I can." His lowest grade last semester: a 90. His highest: 100. His top choices for colleges: Princeton, Cornell and Yale. ■

ROAD TRIP

ON APRIL 20 THROUGH APRIL 25, more than 50 UYL participants will hit the asphalt by bus for the program's annual college excursion. The group will visit seven universities of the students' choosing to tour campuses, interview coeds, and get a feel for collegiate life.

Newborn hope: Army opens resource center for young mothers in the Bronx

It started when Captain Maria Hernandez met two women. They were young. They were hungry, sometimes existing on as little as apples and water, and they were pregnant—one of them with twins.

Hernandez, who runs a Salvation Army community center in the Bronx, knew she had to do something.

Her first answer: organize a community baby shower. The gathering, a surprise, provided enough gifts to keep their babies clothed for long after and brought the mothers-to-be to tears.

But that wasn't enough. There were so many young women in similar

situations living in the neighborhood Hernandez served—according to the New York State Department, more teenagers than in any other borough or any other area in the state.

In October of 2007—thanks to an \$18,000 step-down grant from the Margaret Strachan Endowment Fund and a \$10,000 grant from The Dammann Fund, Inc.—Hernandez took a step toward helping on a larger scale and started The Young Mother's Partnership.

Despite its relative newness, the program is in full swing: networking with agencies like La Leche League and Visiting Nurses Services of New York;

conducting outreach at shelters and high schools; and making a difference in clients' lives through material assistance with supplies like diapers and milk, referrals to services like Medicaid and food stamps, and onsite parenting courses.

But perhaps the most important thing the Partnership provides is companionship. Something that is especially important for young women whose families often disown them when they learn of their pregnancies.

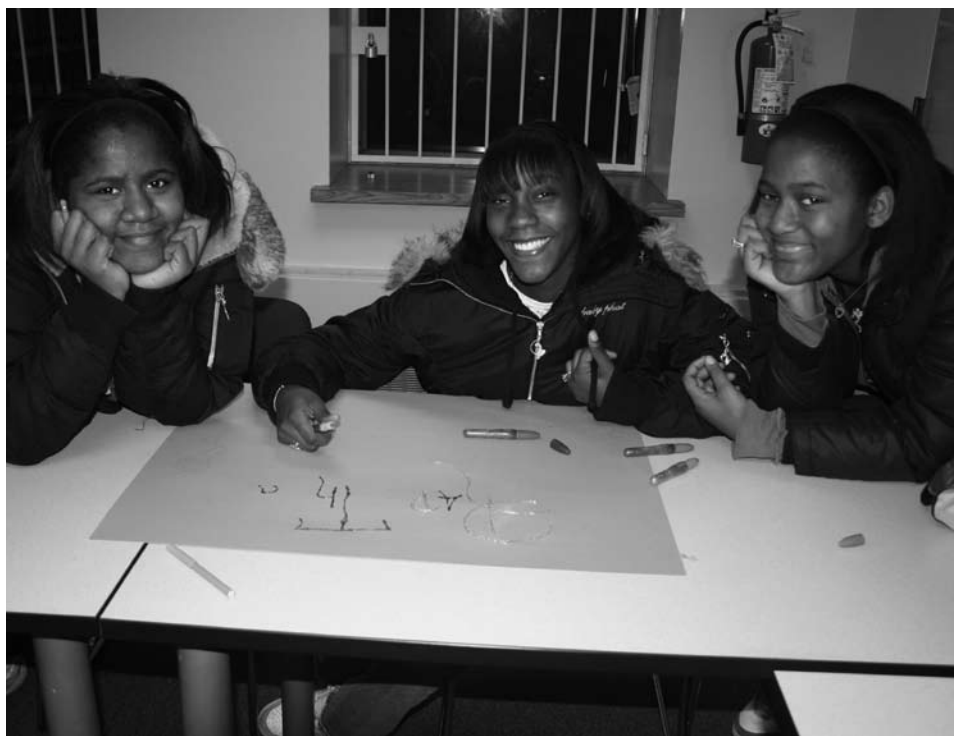
"I let them know that I am not here to judge," says Anamaris Rodriguez, the program coordinator. "I let them know that by the grace of God the Army is here to help." ■

Counseling, with a beat. Foster Care offers a new way to talk about feelings

Therapy isn't too popular with teens in comparison to activities like video games or dancing at the club. But in January and February of this year, a new class organized by The Salvation Army's foster care services proved that talking about your feelings can be cool.

Titled Rap Therapy—or Expressions Through Rap and Music, to make it more palatable to the young masses—the five-week workshop encouraged foster kids to express themselves through rhymes and beats.

Led by Blake LeVine, a social worker well-versed in hip hop culture—and open to adolescents in Salvation Army foster family and group homes—Rap Therapy was meant to provide an outlet for the intense emotions foster children often experience.



KATHERINE PETERS, MADELINE PETERS, AND CARLA PETERS PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON A POSTER FOR THE RAP THERAPY FINALE PERFORMANCE.

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NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS

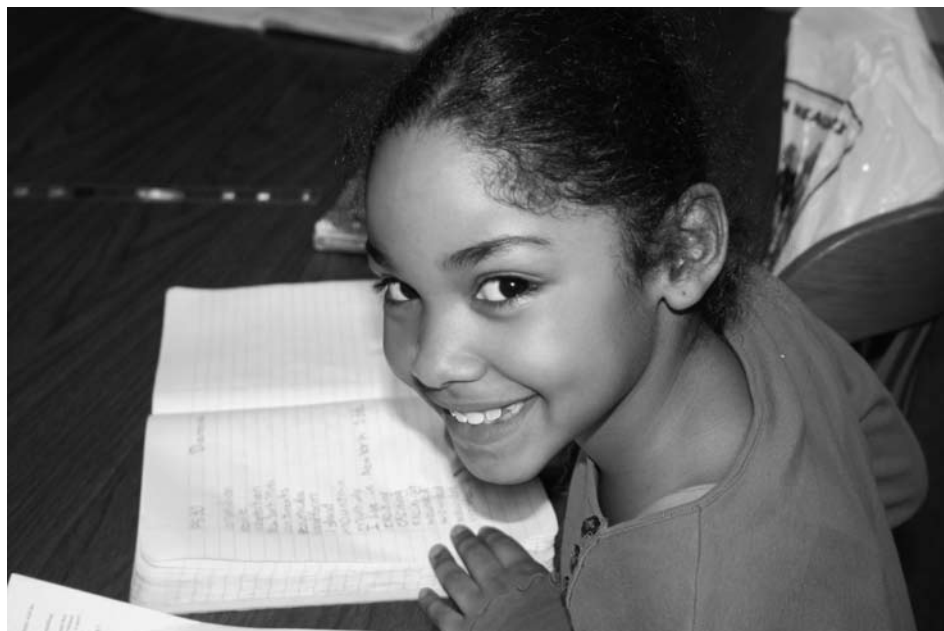
West Harlem GAINS alternative after school options for youngsters

Last summer, when Salvation Army officer Captain Brian Glasco learned he would be transferring from a community center in Bushwick to a community center in West Harlem, “GAINS” was the first thought to cross his mind.

Inspired by the positive experience he had with the Greater Academic Incentives to Nurture Success (GAINS) after school program in Brooklyn—just days after he found out about the move, Glasco called the divisional GAINS director to discuss starting the program at his new post.

“When I was a child, The Salvation Army was my safe haven after school,” said Glasco, who grew up in a rough neighborhood in Camden, New Jersey. “I wanted to give that to other children—especially those with limited resources.”

It didn’t take long for Glasco to reach his goal. In October 2007, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development awarded The Salvation Army a grant of \$970,000 to be dispersed over the course of the next three-and-a-half years.



MAKING HEADWAY HARLEM GAINS PARTICIPANT PLUGS AWAY AT AN ASSIGNMENT.

In January of 2008, the new program was launched, making the center the ninth Salvation Army location to offer GAINS and adding an additional 99 kids to the 675 served by existing sites.

Like others, the West Harlem GAINS program will offer a structured schedule of homework help and enrichment activities like art and music—but it will also have a special

emphasis on new technology.

Students will have access to nearly 30 new computers and learn useful, potentially marketable skills like networking and website design. “We want to give kids something they are excited about,” said Glasco. “A lot of times kids will take that excitement with them back to the classroom”. ■

About The Salvation Army Greater New York Division’s youth services

From ABCs to SATs The Salvation Army offers a wide array of services for low income families and their children including:

- Star lake Camp, a 400-acre sleep away summer camp in the woods of New Jersey
- 875 music, vocal, dance and drama lessons each week
- 11 day care facilities, serving 865 kids
- 10 adolescent group homes
- 13 after school programs, serving more than 1,000 elementary school students
- 10 adolescent group homes
- 2 family shelters
- 2 teen drop in centers, serving 220 teens
- 3 youth sports programs, serving 200 youngsters
- Foster care and adoption services, handling up to 450 cases at a time
- Toy distribution during the holiday season

GIVE HER A MONTH

Guerda Baucicaut is adamant about helping young people and she's not afraid to give herself a deadline by which to do it.

▶ EACH ISSUE OF *CHANGING LIVES* BRINGS A GLIMPSE OF HOW SALVATION ARMY CONSTITUENTS—WHETHER OFFICERS, CLIENTS OR STAFF—ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO HELP.

There are few feelings sweeter than making a difference in a young person's life.

Just ask Guerda Baucicaut. On top of holding down a full time job, the Haiti native spends up to 30 hours a week teaching children and teens in Salvation Army academic programs.

Unfazed by learning disabilities, emotional disorders, or lack of funds—Baucicaut is constantly searching for innovative solutions like a “books alive” activity using puppets, or a public library card requirement. And she is as bold as she is creative.

“Give me a month. I’ll make it better,” Baucicaut told a mother whose son was having trouble and wanted him to change schools.

“I’ll make you a bet,” she told a stubborn teen. “If at the end of the



BAUCICAUT IN HER CLASSROOM AT THE EAST HARLEM COMMUNITY CENTER

year you don’t want to go to college, I’ll quit my job.”

Her no nonsense tactics work. After Baucicaut helped him with his reading skills, that elementary student didn’t transfer. The teen who was so sure she wouldn’t go to college—did.

And there are dozens more kids just like them who Baucicaut has touched by teaching: numbers, English, how to make friends, and more. Still, the good samaritan says her work is nowhere near finished. “There are so many others out there,” she said. “There is still so much to do.” ■

Counseling, continued from page 4

While making teens comfortable enough to talk about their past can be difficult in other settings, the familiarity of the art form and rap icons made this class different.

Young participants didn’t hesitate to share revealing rhymes with the group as they wrote raps together in class, or with family and friends in a culminating performance on February 7—some example lyrics: “My mommy, I miss her, her laugh her scent,” or, “I may never let go of this pain.”

Tina Nieves, the Reinvestment Supervisor for Foster Care, says Rap Therapy’s ability to help participants open up is crucial.

“It is so important for them to put their emotions into words,” said Nieves, who hopes to make the program permanent. “If they don’t, they internalize the feelings, which can lead to low self esteem and potentially damaging thoughts.”

Jammy Diez, a 19-year-old who has been in foster care since he was two, agrees that the cathartic element of Rap Therapy has been positive. “It’s good,” Diez said. “Because everyone knows what your are about and what you’ve been through.” ■

MANY FACES MANY NEEDS ONE FAMILY

THE SALVATION ARMY GREATER NEW YORK DIVISION IS A LOCALLY-BASED UNIT OF AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION SERVING 111 COUNTRIES WORLD-WIDE. OPERATING OVER 140 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE FIVE BOROUGHS OF NEW YORK CITY, LONG ISLAND, AND THE HUDSON VALLEY, THE GREATER NEW YORK

DIVISION HELPS 600,000 OF THE REGION’S MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS EACH YEAR—AND VALUES EVERY ONE OF THEM LIKE FAMILY. FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT OUR SERVICES—WHICH RANGE FROM SHELTERS, TO ADULT EDUCATION, TO AFFORDABLE DAY CARE PLEASE VISIT WWW.SALVATIONARMYNEWYORK.ORG.