



SUMMER 2013 NEWSLETTER

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The Association of Community Employment Programs for the Homeless



Again, **ACE** would like to thank our supporters for the generous financial gifts, volunteer time and enthusiasm you contribute to enrich our services to New York City's homeless. Thanks to you, the men and women in our programs are making exceptional progress – below are just a few of their achievements **in the last three months:**

- **25** program participants found full-time jobs
- **20** graduates and participants attended our 3-night financial literacy workshop, learning about credit repair, budgeting and savings/investments
- **41** program participants created a professional résumé
- **16** program participants received interview-appropriate clothing through our partner agencies Dress for Success and CareerGear
- **8** program participants increased their earning power by obtaining Customer Service certificates through our Adult Education program
- **20** program participants attended computer classes at Apple's SoHo store

Celebrating 21 Years of Services to the Homeless

On May 21st, more than 250 ACE supporters gathered at the Russian Tea Room for our 21st Annual Gala, to celebrate our work and continued success. Emceed by TV host and news correspondent Rita Cosby, the event presented Dorothea and Jon Bon Jovi of the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation with the ACE Humanitarian Award, and honored restaurateur John McDonald, restaurateur Josh Pickard, Scholastic Inc. Chairman, President and CEO Richard D. Robinson, championship winning race car driver and entrepreneur Alan Wilzig, and Billboard Magazine Top 10 recording artist Ivan Wilzig.



The evening featured music, entertainment and celebrity appearances; however, the highlight of the program was inarguably ACE graduate Rickey Henegan's poignant speech about his journey to independence. Bringing many guests to tears, Rickey's story was a deeply touching example of how our work enables the homeless to dramatically change their lives for the better. Indeed, hearing him speak was a wonderful reward for the efforts we make



every day at ACE to set our program participants on the path to success. Thank you, Rickey, and all our gala supporters, for making the evening so memorable!

Read our interview with Rickey inside to learn more about him and his accomplishments at ACE!

Congratulations to our 24 new ACE graduates!



On May 2nd, we celebrated 24 new Project Comeback graduates in a ceremony at St. Anthony's Church. Beaming with pride, our graduates entered the stage one by one to receive their hard-earned diplomas, along with standing ovations from friends, family and ACE supporters. The ceremony also saluted last year's graduates, who have successfully kept their jobs for over a year, and remain connected with ACE through our aftercare program, Project Stay. Delivering a powerful performance, 2012 graduate Diane Love read a self-written poem to the audience, sharing how she managed to overcome her personal challenges and turn her life around at ACE. She concluded, "The ACE program got me the first job that I've ever had in my life. They had more confidence in me than I had in myself."

Our new spring graduates now work full-time in food service, maintenance, retail, security and messenger service. We wish them the best as they embark on their new journeys, and look forward to keeping in touch through *Project Stay!*

Please join us for our next graduation on Tuesday, September 17th!

Keep up with ACE on Facebook and Twitter!

Want to stay informed about what we're up to at ACE, and get to know our participants and staff a little better? Then please like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter! We have a brand new social media team, who are updating our accounts daily with program news, our participants' latest accomplishments, shout-outs to our business sponsors, and other little anecdotes that we would love to share with you. Come and interact with us – we look forward to "seeing" you online!



www.facebook.com/aceprograms
www.twitter.com/acenewyork

Supporter Spotlight – Charles Iulo

Charles Iulo made his first donation to ACE in 2007 through his then-newly founded charity, The Young New York Foundation (YNY), and joined our Junior Committee – an initiative for young professionals striving to make a difference in their local community – in 2010. A born and bred native New Yorker, Charlie was raised on the Upper West Side and now resides in Brooklyn. One of ACE's most dedicated supporters, Charlie frequently contributes to the agency in many capacities. He is a regular guest at our graduation ceremonies and often volunteers in our programs – most recently by lending a hand at our annual Thanksgiving celebration, and by conducting mock interviews with Project Comeback participants. This coming fall, he plans on recruiting select program participants to work on construction projects for his company.



With its focus on individual responsibility and achievement, ACE's mission resonates deeply with Charlie's personal values. A proponent of sustainable social change, he finds great reward in being able to help make a long-lasting impact in the community: "Without question what attracts me most about the program is ACE's ability to change people's lives for the long term. Rather than handing out a meal or giving someone money, they create an environment and culture that promotes and rewards hard work, discipline and self-improvement. I have seen the results first-hand: their participants and graduates want to work, want to get back on their feet and want to improve their lives for the long-term." We cannot thank Charlie enough for his extraordinary dedication, generous support and efforts to help enhance our programs and continue our mission to empower New York City's homeless.



On the Road to Success – Rickey’s Story

Rickey came to ACE in May 2012, after having struggled with homelessness and substance abuse for a couple of years. Born in Brooklyn and raised in New Jersey, he attended the Essex County College in Newark, and went on to work for nearly 30 years in the service industry and as the manager of a day care center. But after a family tragedy shattered his life, leaving him in despair, he slowly fell into a downward spiral of alcohol and drugs. As his situation began spinning further out of control, Rickey ended up in the street, having lost all that mattered to him – his job, his home and his loved ones.

“My situation was pretty rough,” he says, explaining how he repeatedly tried to get back on his feet and find a job, but ran into roadblocks everywhere. Despite bringing many years of solid work experience, he kept getting turned down by employers, mainly due to his lack of computer skills. But Rickey refused to give up – instead, he decided to find a way to learn how to use a computer, ultimately ending up in *Project Comeback*.

At ACE, Rickey quickly distinguished himself as one of our most exceptional participants. Thanks to his hard work in our computer classes, he soon learned to master the basics, moving on to use his newfound skills for online job search. He passed our math and literacy intake tests with flying colors; yet he chose to attend all classes to further refine his academic skills. Our crew supervisors assigned him his own sweeping route in the West Village, confident that he



could manage the job single-handedly. He was also selected to help train new crew members, as well as perform special services for local businesses.

Rickey credits much of his success to the personal relationships he developed with ACE staff members during his time in the program. “The conversations, the direction, the words of encouragement – they all made me stay strong and focused,” he says.

Since September 2012, Rickey works full-time as a maintenance technician at a mental health facility, describing himself as a go-to guy who handles “everything that happens in the building.” When not busy at work, he loves spending time with his family – he recently got engaged, and has nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren! “I just try to be a role model for my grandkids. If I can have an impact in their lives, that’s good enough for me,” he offers.

Rickey’s outstanding achievements recently afforded him one of the coveted spots in ACE’s new housing program, *Project Home*. His next goal is to advance his career, by moving up and securing a job with managerial and/or supervisory responsibilities. Working ambitiously towards this goal, he is building his “hard skills,” currently completing the final stages of obtaining the New York State Security Guard License and Fireguard and Fire Safety Certificate.

Rickey advises new *Project Comeback* participants to be humble, always communicate with the staff and treat the opportunity to attend the program as if it were a real job. “If you can’t take orders, you shouldn’t be here. Stick and stay, and talk to the staff whenever you have a problem – that’s what they’re here for.”

Read more success stories on our website:
www.acenewyork.org



The ACE Crew Arrives in Brooklyn!

We are proud to announce that the ACE maintenance crew has expanded their service area to include Brooklyn! As of May, in collaboration with the Neighborhood Plaza Partnership and The Horticultural Society of New York, our crew now provides sweeping, watering and planting services to the newly created George B. Post Plaza in Williamsburg. In mid-July, ACE also started providing maintenance, beautification and streetscape services to the Atlantic Avenue Business Improvement District.



We are excited about the opportunity to help make the Post Plaza and the Atlantic Avenue BID clean, beautiful, and green destinations for visitors as well as local Brooklynites and New Yorkers – all while our participants are gaining valuable work experience and “hard skills” training in horticultural services, thus improving their career prospects and earning power.

Corporate Volunteers Making a Difference at our Career Day

On May 3rd, ACE held a Career Day for our Project Comeback participants at St. Anthony’s Church in SoHo. We were fortunate to have ten corporate volunteers spending the whole day engaging with 38 enthusiastic ACE participants, sharing career advice and interview tips, critiquing participants’ “elevator pitches,” and socializing and networking over lunch.

The event was a huge success; participants were thrilled over the opportunity to practice the “job readiness” skills they’ve gained in ACE’s workshops, and our volunteers enjoyed their day of giving back and doing something meaningful for the community. One of them commented afterward, “Thank you for a fantastic day on Friday! It was truly a rewarding experience to work with your organization and help provide guidance to the program participants at ACE. I look forward to making this an annual activity!”



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