



2014 WRAP UP NEWSLETTER

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The Association of Community Employment Programs for the Homeless

ACE would like to thank all of the supporters who made 2014 great. You contributed financially, volunteered your time and provided gifts in kind. Your partnerships have made it possible for us to offer vocational rehabilitation services that fundamentally changed lives in 2014. Thanks to you, the men and women at ACE are achieving their goals of independence!

Donors and Volunteers Make the Holidays Extraordinary

The holiday season was bountiful for the men and women in ACE's Program. We kicked it off with our annual Thanksgiving Luncheon, where we served food to nearly one hundred ACE participants and graduates. With the help of 20 tremendous volunteers, the luncheon was a seamless success. Thank you to those who volunteered their time. You made this a holiday that our clients will not soon forget.

A luncheon wouldn't be much without a lunch, so we also thank all of the incredible restaurants, from right here in SoHo, that generously donated huge portions of food. On this occasion we served appetizers, entrees and desserts from La Esquina, Dean and Deluca, The Cupping Room Café, Hundred Acres, Delicatassen, Mooncake Foods, Boqueria, TriBeCa Treats, Baked by Melissa, the Trump SoHo, and Hood Chef. Thank you for giving back to your community. You are beacons of generosity and good will...and your dishes are delicious!



Following Thanksgiving was our end of the year holiday celebration. We know there is nothing better for a parent than seeing the excitement on their child's face as they first lay eyes on the pile of presents wearing their name. That's why we are giving a HUGE THANK YOU to the Lost Boy's Motorcycle Club, Scholastic, and TriBeCa Film Center for donating a mountain of toys to ACE. After trivia, raffles and a ton of food, we ended the holiday celebration with all of the parents and grandparents in our program receiving a sack full of toys to take home to the kids.

Being able to provide for their families is an enormous motivation for the men and women that join ACE. Thank you for making that goal achievable. You understand that the gift of ACE keeps on giving. The confidence and skills found here propels individuals into the workforce and enables them to provide on their own indefinitely. Thank you!

A Heartwarming Graduation to Celebrate Full-Time Employment for 18 Men and Women

Congratulations to the 18 men and women who were recognized and honored at our November 24th Graduation Ceremony! These men and women have taken the onus onto themselves to turn their lives around, and we applauded them as they courageously shared the hardships and triumphs that they have experienced along that journey.

After each graduate expressed what it means for them to become gainfully employed, the evening was capped with Maceo, a long-time graduate and project home participant, delivering a speech to our current program participants. Maceo was the first ever participant to enter *Project Home*, ACE's three year housing subsidy, and this March will mark his completion. During his years in *Project Home*, he has continued to work with ACE, pursuing certifications in Food Handling, OSHA Workplace Safety, Spanish and Food Service Management and Leadership.



With the resources that YOU put in place, Maceo went from unemployment, to earning \$13 an hour in 2012, and has since increased his earning power by another 149%. On November 24th, he shared his successes with those in attendance and admonished the current participants to utilize all of the services that ACE has to offer. This was a powerful and resounding message for the individuals sitting where he sat just three short years ago.

It is because of YOU, our friends and supporters, that these ACE graduates are able to take the stage and tell their comeback story. We thank you for providing them with the outlet to pursue their ambitions of self-sufficiency. We would love to have you at our next Graduation, so please reach out to Michele Schuster at mschuster@acenewyork.org for details.

Raymond's Story: Overcoming Homelessness and Drug Addiction After 35 Years

By ACE Staff, Travis Tinney

Raymond can light up a room with his words, smile and laugh. He is smart, charismatic and friendly. One would never guess that for 35 years he was lost in drug use, in and out of jail, and on the streets. I sat down with the now employed ACE graduate to hear a bit about his struggle and comeback. This is Raymond's Story:

Raymond was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He was one of 13 children living under one roof. "Life was great," he says, "we played stick-ball, punch-ball, there were no computers. Kids got a lot more recreation outside and not on the living room couch." He recalls his childhood with a big smile on his face.

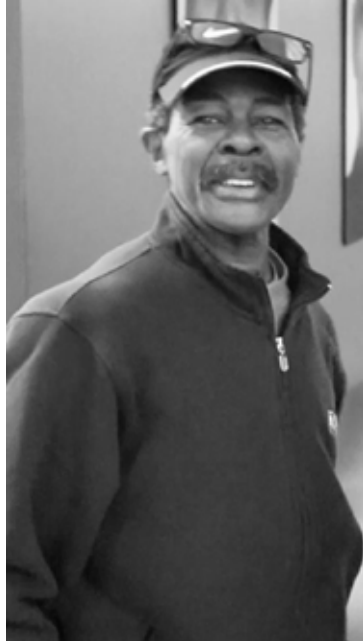
"I went as far as the 10th grade... I had to drop out to help out at home."

Those simpler times did not last as long as Raymond would have liked. As one of the older siblings, he felt that school was not his best option. "I went as far as the 10th grade in school," he recalls, "but, of course, I had to drop out to help out at home." He explains that his efforts at legitimate work did not last and he quickly succumbed to drug use. When I ask about his young adult life after school, he puts on a smile and shakes his head with a sense of disbelief at his former reality. "My young adult life was crazy, because I used drugs for all of it, until I came to ACE."

Raymond, now 60 years old, is surprisingly open about some of the harder times, hustling and coming in and out of jail. He shares insight into drug abuse that comes after 40 years of using and, most recently, three years of sobriety. "In the beginning," he says, "it's fun. But no one ever tells you that in the end, the drug is going to take over. I had to learn that I love drugs, but drugs don't love me."

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Recounting when times were near their worst, Raymond tells me, "I was homeless for three years. I ran with 3 other guys in those days. We found an old tractor-trailer in a lot and fixed it up. We lived there for three years. There was a sanitation department a block and a half from us and we knew one of the guys that worked there. He got high also, so he used to let us use the slop sink in there to bathe."



By 2012 Raymond was done living on the wrong side of the law. Standing in front of a judge, he was faced with the most important decision of his life—jail or rehab. He eagerly accepted rehab, and on February 2nd, 2012, at 57 Years old, Raymond checked into a drug treatment center and began a new chapter of his life. Thinking of that day he says, "My birthday is three days later, so I can never forget that day. It was the greatest birthday present to myself."

After several months in treatment, a counselor suggested that he start thinking about employment. "I never thought I was going to work again, in a legitimate job, paying taxes." He remembers, "I hadn't worked since 1979." Despite his pretenses, he came to ACE and began to chip away at his fears of a real job.

Several months passed and as Raymond saw his skill-set grow, his confidence grew with it. "ACE taught me how to get back into the workforce. Things were totally different when I worked." He says, "There were no computers, cover letters or resumes. None of that existed." To be specific, while Raymond was at ACE, he took our classes in computers, job search, resume writing, interview prep and financial management. He even obtained his OSHA certification.

"I was beaming inside. I said, I got the job, I got it."

After six months, Raymond was going on interviews. Given his personable disposition, it did not take long before he landed a job. Speaking about those interviews, his pride is palpable. He excitedly recites

for me the history of his employer, an extremely popular restaurant in NYC, and tells how he impressed the interviewer with his preparedness. When he was called back for a second interview with the GM he knew the job was his. He is grinning from ear to ear as he thinks back on that moment. "I was beaming inside. I said, I got the job, I got it." Sure enough, the GM hired him on the spot.

"I love who I am today, that's the whole thing right there. I love who I am today."

Raymond's new life still isn't a pumpkin patch, but he knows it's worth the hard work. "I've been clean for three years now, and I love it. My family loves it. And I love my job." His favorite part of working is, "Getting the paycheck and knowing I earned it," and to my surprise, he adds, "and paying taxes." I guess, unlike most of us who lament losing a cut to Uncle Sam, Raymond is proud that for the first time in 35 years he is contributing his fair share.

When I ask what all this means to him, he pauses. Then, with a still confidence, Raymond says, "I love who I am today, that's the whole thing right there. I love who I am today. I'm proud of who I am today." The room is officially lit up.

We are extremely grateful for your support in helping Raymond and others like him to make their comeback. To watch a video of Raymond's interview, visit www.acenewyork.org.

Outstanding Reputation Brings ACE to Church Avenue in Brooklyn

We are proud to announce that ACE has been chosen by City Council member, Brad Lander, to provide maintenance services to Church Avenue as part of the Clean Up NYC initiative. You will find us on the ten block stretch of Church Avenue, from E. 5th to Chester Avenue, on Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. This is ACE's third assignment in Brooklyn, along with Nostrand Avenue (Clean Up NYC) and Atlantic Avenue (BID).

Commenting on what it means to ACE to have been chosen to provide services on Church Avenue, ACE Executive Director, Jim Martin, comments, "The Association of Community Employment (ACE) is proud to partner with Council Member Brad Lander to provide supplemental sanitation services to Church Avenue in the heart of Kensington, Brooklyn. This partnership will not only improve the cleanliness of this corridor, it will also allow ACE to provide vital outreach services to the recovering homeless men and women who reside within the District." We give a big thank you to Councilmen Lander for recognizing ACE's unique vision of service to the community and the individuals therein. We'll see you in Brooklyn!



You Provide Hard Skills, They Build Careers

Thanks to your support in 2014, ACE was extremely proud to roll out its Hard Skills Training Program. We began by offering certification courses in OSHA and Food Safety, and then in November we expanded with our most ambitious training yet—Custodial Services. 20 ACE participants, currently in Project Comeback, took part in this 40 hour, hands-on training, and every single one recorded perfect attendance. The attendees now boast competitive resumes that qualify them to work in full-time positions with higher pay and benefits.

We are seeing positive and encouraging results from our 2014 Hard Skills Training, and it is clear that the potential that this new program poses is unprecedented. With your help we are doing more than just putting capable individuals in jobs, we're teaching them to build careers. Together, we are taking action to equip recovering homeless New Yorkers with the tools for self-sufficiency.

We want to congratulate all of our participants and graduates who have been hired or have seen an increase in wage as a result of their hard work in these trainings! We also want to thank all of you who have supported ACE. It is your donations that enable us to continually improve our program and meet our participant's needs.

You Rode the Midnight Express, and Raised \$17,000

In October, over 100 ACE supporters poured into the TriBeCa Grand Hotel for an evening of live entertainment. Author and Screen Writer, Billy Hayes, took the stage and recounted his harrowing story of time in a Turkish prison and his brazen escape. If the story sounds familiar, that's probably because it inspired the Best Picture winning film, *Midnight Express*.

We are grateful to the TriBeCa Grand Hotel for providing the food, beverages and venue, to Billy Hayes for sharing his adventure and, of course, to everyone who attended. Together, we raised \$17,000 to support vocational training for homeless men and women. That funding means more training, more classroom time, new learning tools and better maintenance

supplies for the men and women we serve. Every single dollar YOU have contributed translates into a stronger resume and more job opportunities for the proud participants of ACE.

If you were not able to attend, don't worry, there will be more fun events in the near future. But, just so you know, the big takeaway for the evening was: don't smuggle hashish!



ACE Is Proud to Partner with The NYC Rescue Mission

ACE is excited to announce a partnership with one of New York City's top humanitarian institutions—The NYC Rescue Mission. This admirable organization has been serving those in need since 1872, and their strengths just happen to fit perfectly to ACE's. In a peanut butter and jelly level match, ACE and the NYC Rescue Mission are teaming up to offer New Yorkers in need the stable environment and training they need to break into the next chapter of their lives.

Here is how it will work: NYC Rescue Mission will offer their participants long term lodging if they are accepted into ACE's program, and ACE will refer any of our participants in need of housing to NYC Rescue Mission. Simple, right? Right. But it is only because of ACE's staunch supporters that this partnership is even possible, so thank you. We also thank the entire NYC Rescue Mission team for the opportunity to work together and address the needs of New York City's most overlooked citizens. Now, let's get to work!

EBay Foundation's Solutions Lab Is Open for Business



In November, ACE participants sat down and worked for the very first time in the ACE Solutions Lab. Thanks to a \$7500 grant from the eBay Foundation's Give Team, our participants have the best learning resources that eBay's money can buy. The Lab is equipped with new tables and chairs, two new chalkboards, a wireless projector, a projector screen, mounted shelves, computer software upgrades and stationary supplies.

Every day, ACE's men and women are using these tools to build their professional repertoire. They are learning how to search for jobs and write their resumes, as well as honing their reading, writing and math skills. The second Saturday of each month, ACE Solutions Lab hosts our Career Prep Clinic, where volunteers work side by side with ACE's clients to give specific attention to the areas they need most. Thank you to all the volunteers who are making the ACE Solutions Lab an unforgettable learning space for so many, and thank you to the eBay Foundation for making the whole thing possible!

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities at ACE, please contact our Education and Volunteer Coordinator, Deja Williams, at dwilliams@acenewyork.org.

SoHo Broadway BID Hires ACE Graduates to Clean Broadway

If you have strolled down Broadway in SoHo any time since Thanksgiving, you may have noticed something was a little off. *Why aren't I tripping over garbage? And where is all the graffiti? The garbage cans aren't overflowing!* For this transformation we can thank the SoHo Broadway BID, who hired ACE as the BID maintenance provider. As a result, on Nov. 17th, ACE Graduates put the first broom to Broadway's pavement in 4 years and the improvement is remarkable. In the first week alone, 1300 instances of graffiti were removed from 165 pieces of public furniture and street fixtures.

As mentioned, the men and women working for the SoHo Broadway BID are all ACE Grads. This transitional work is providing a living wage as they continue to job search with ACE. We thank the SoHo Broadway BID board and Executive Director, Mark Dicus, for this opportunity, and all of the ACE supporters who have invested in these individuals. Because of you, men and women who were once homeless are now proud, contributing members of the community. They are making Broadway a cleaner and safer place for everyone who lives and works in the area as well as the thousands of visitors who walk the corridor every day.

ACE by the Numbers

Here are some of ACE's achievements in the last three months of 2014:

- 94 Hard Skills Trainings were taken by 61 participants and graduates
- 27 individuals found full-time employment
- 4,266 classroom hours logged by ACE participants
- 19 volunteers donated 76 hours of their time

Upcoming Events

Graduation

Wednesday, March 4th

St. Anthony's Church, 154 Sullivan St.

6:30-8:30 PM

Latin Night at the Crosby Hotel

79 Crosby Street

March 12th, 7-10 PM

Advance Tickets: \$125; Door Tickets \$150

Contact Sandra Sanches for details

E: ssanches@acenewyork.org P: 212.274.0100 x 10

2015 ACE Gala

Wednesday, May 20th

Contact Sandra Sanches for details

E: ssanches@acenewyork.org P: 212.274.0100 x 10

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