June Newsletter

Project Hope

Connecting current & former youth in foster care with mentors who serve as a positive role model & make a lasting impact on their lives!

www.facebook.com/projecthopementoring · 717-337-0110

Interested in making a difference in our community? Contact Tessa at: projecthope@adamscounty.us and let’s get started!

New York City: Through Their Eyes

They say one never forgets their first trip to New York City. For many of us growing up in Pennsylvania, trips to the city where dreams are made of may be something that over time, we’ve taken for granted. Many schools take field trips to the big apple and once you’re older, NYC is just a short train ride away from our state’s capitol. However, for the youth that we serve through the Independent Living (IL) and Project Hope (PH) programs, experiencing the city that never sleeps may be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

This month, IL and PH youth spent the day exploring NYC with staff and PH mentors along for the ride. As the Program Coordinator for PH, I have the privilege of doing many fun and exciting things with our youth. A big part of my job is encouraging and empowering their growing minds and I often get to watch the seeds that I plant bloom. As I continue working hand-in-hand with other caseworkers, I have quickly realized that their experience with our youth can be and most often is incredibly different than mine. Throughout our day in the city, I thought of the caseworkers I have met during my short time with the agency who I knew were working tirelessly in their cubicles back in Gettysburg while I spent the day experiencing New York City with the youth that they too serve. Typically, I write articles in the PH newsletter for others to know the great accomplishments PH has checked off the to-do list and upcoming events we’re excited about. However this month, in addition to sharing about our experience in NYC, I am doing so with our hardworking caseworkers in mind from start to finish.

Our day started incredibly early as we boarded the bus with our sights set on the city of dreams. The majority of the youth attending had never been to NYC or if they had, they were very young and didn’t remember what it was like. One of our youth was decked out in NYC gear from head-to-toe, sporting a Yankees cap and a hoodie that said “NEW YORK” in big, bold letters on the side. Clearly, our youth were trying to fit in with the locals and not stand out as tourists at all. A very sweet memory for the adults on board for sure. (Continued on Page 2)

THANK YOU!

Organizations in Adams County are incredibly supportive of Project Hope and our mission.

Gettysburg College!

Multiple organizations and departments have made time to meet with me throughout the past month in an effort to join forces and keep their students invested into the Gettysburg community as well as have Project Hope youth get to know ‘real life’ college students.

A huge thanks goes out to:

Darrien Davenport, Executive Director of Multicultural Engagement

Cindy Wright, Director of Campus Recreation

Gretchen Natter, Executive Director/Assistant Dean of College Life, Center for Public Service

We look forward to working with you this school year!

Visit our website: www.adamscounty.us/Dept/CYS/Pages/Mentoring-Program.aspx
New York City: Through Their Eyes Cont.

I’m one of those people who enjoy watching the groom’s reaction at a wedding more than watching the bride walk down the aisle. Similarly, as I’ve been to NYC countless times, I found it incredibly fulfilling to watch our youth’s eyes get bigger with each passing skyscraper, as they looked through the bus’s windows and pointed out their sightings to one another. We parked and walked toward our lunch destination: Ellen’s Stardust Diner. Ellen’s is a famous diner known for their singing staff who perform musical numbers as well as top hits while you enjoy your meal in a 50’s inspired diner. I enjoyed lunch with two PH mentees and a PH mentor and of course, sang along with them as they enjoyed the different songs playing throughout our meal. As we were leaving, one of the young women said, referencing the other mentee, “Miss Tessa, we thought we were going to hate this and didn’t want to hurt your feelings, but we loved it! This was great!” I laughed, remembering how sensitive our youth can be to what they think our needs are, and explained this is why we encourage them to try new things and love being a part of their new experiences.

After lunch, we headed to Broadway to experience the incredibly popular musical, Wicked. There were a few young men on our trip who let out a few moans as we walked to Broadway, expressing this was their nap time and to wake them when the show was over. Wicked is the ninth-longest-running musical on Broadway for a reason: it’s incredible and just about everyone on the planet loves it. We boarded the bus shortly after leaving the musical and before the staff could even ask the young men what they thought, they couldn’t wait to tell us about their favorite parts and characters. The adults couldn’t help but smile as they talked about their Broadway experience, knowing that this was one more interest we had introduced them to that they may have had a preconceived notion about and never experienced without this trip.

When you choose a career working with teenagers, especially at-risk youth, the words “thank you” are not words you hear often from them. However, if you look more closely, you’ll see they say thank you in many different ways. For example, witnessing one of the mentees react to a street performer call out to her as we walked by, still makes me laugh to myself knowing that she will never forget that moment. Another youth said thank you when I saw his face realize that I wasn’t kidding – taxis will not stop for pedestrians in NYC and will absolutely speed up if you’re walking without the right of way. While I realize spending a day in NYC is an experience in itself and am grateful our youth got to experience it; for me, seeing NYC through their eyes is truly the only thanks I could ever need.

I am thankful to have a job working with the youth where I am able to see the hard work of our agency and programs pay off and am equally thankful to work with such dedicated caseworkers who help our youth more than they probably know. A huge thank you goes out to the IL team for planning such a great event!

Project Hope Events: Recent & Upcoming!

June 7 – NYC Trip!

June 24 – Mentor Training! Current mentors will come together to network, share stories about their mentoring experience, and learn about ways to develop a deeper relationship with their mentees.

July 11 – Independent Living Picnic!

July 15 – Mentor Orientation! Those who have applied to be mentors with Project Hope participate in an orientation where they learn about the mission of Project Hope, the youth we serve, and how they fit into our goals for our youth.

Project Hope Stats:

★ 1 new mentor!
★ 2 new pending matches!
★ 2 new mentee referrals!
★ 4 new partnerships!
★ 1 new pending mentor group!

Visit our website: www.adamscounty.us/Dept/CYS/Pages/Mentoring-Program.aspx