

CAREER *Beginnings*

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER, 2009-2010

GRADUATION, 2010!

On May 26th, 2010, Career Beginnings held its 24th graduation ceremony at Trinity College. One hundred and forty nine students successfully completed the Hartford-area college access program. Of those 149 students, 146 have been accepted into college and intend to enroll in the Fall of 2010.

Dr. James F. Jones, President of Trinity college, opened the ceremony with a warm welcome. He was followed by student speaker, Lekien McFini (East Hartford High School), who read her college essay to the audience describing her homeland of Nigeria, the civil war that forced her family to come to America, and her commitment to give back to the community. Lekien will be attending the University of Hartford in the fall.

Student speaker Cameika Ramsey (A.I. Prince Technical School), spoke about the relationship that she has with her Career Beginnings mentor, Nadine Linton, and how the Career Beginnings program helped her to be accepted at all colleges to which she applied. Cameika will be attending Saint Joseph College this fall.

Deacon Art Miller, Director of Black Catholic Ministries for the Archdiocese of Hartford, was the keynote speaker. Deacon Art spoke of his own childhood growing up as a civil rights activist and challenged the members of the graduating class to commit themselves to meaningful causes and efforts!



Left to right: Carla Hawkins, College Counselor, Zakiya Edens, College Counselor, Cameika Ramsey, graduation speaker, Nadine Linton, her Career Beginnings mentor.

Career Beginnings is a program of the Hartford Consortium for higher Education. The Hartford Consortium is a collaborative endeavor of the public and private colleges and universities in the Hartford area. Founded in 1972, the Consortium is a vehicle for the development of joint programs that serve students, faculty and the wider community.

Membership: Capital Community College, Central Connecticut State University, Goodwin College, Hartford Seminary, Rensselaer at Hartford, Saint Joseph College, Trinity College, University of Connecticut, University of Hartford

Mentors Make a Difference

Brian Clark

I first got involved in Career Beginnings because I was jealous of my wife, who had thoroughly enjoyed mentoring a remarkable young woman through the program. I was eager to get a turn myself, to make a difference in the life of a young man, but I was unprepared for what a difference Juan would make in my life.

When I first met Juan at one of the evening Career Beginnings meetings, he limped toward me with a swaying step, wearing a heavy backpack full of books. He was polite but shy and very soft spoken, perhaps because of the cerebral palsy that complicated his walk and his studies. As I asked him questions about his home and school, and as I bent close to listen, I started piecing together something of his life and its daunting challenges.

We talked about his neighborhood and its many dangers. We talked about his circle of friends, who played video games together and helped each other steer clear of drugs and gangs. He didn't want to say anything about his father, but we talked of his single mother, who struggled to take care of her children and to provide them the best home life she could.

Then we talked about school. From what I could gather, many of the teachers had written off Juan and his classmates and were content to pacify them with videos. But Juan really wanted to learn. His face lit up when he talked about his psychology teacher, a man who really tried to challenge his students. Juan told me he wanted to study psychology in college so he could become a social worker, to help others who were suffering.

I acknowledged what Juan already knew. He had never lived a fair day in his life. Nothing about his capabilities, or circumstances, or opportunities, had ever been fair. But I assured him that there was still hope. With hard work, he could continue his education and become a college graduate. I told him he would have cut back on TV, read as much as he could, and do his best in his in his classes. He nodded, determined. I bought him a special book designed to teach SAT and college vocabulary. By Christmas, every single page in that book was covered with his spidery handwriting.

By the end of his senior year, Juan was eagerly anticipating work at a local community college and he was preparing to attend an academic boot-camp designed to help students make up for lost time. When I said goodbye to him, he just wouldn't let go of my hand. He kept shaking it over and over again, saying "Thank you, Mr. Clark. I really appreciate it." I am grateful to have been a part of Juan's life. I know I taught him important lessons about preparing for college, and I can only hope that I can master the lessons he taught me about persistence and sheer heart.

To learn more about volunteering with Career Beginnings, contact Program Director, Martin Estey.

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Mentor Valerie Wilson (Saint Joseph College) and Career Beginnings student Brittany Golding (Weaver High School). Brittany will be attending Virginia Commonwealth University in the fall.

Director's Notes

Martin Estey, Ph.D.

Career Beginnings is a small program that has a big impact. We serve over 400 students in the greater Hartford area in grades 9-12 with three full time staff members. Nevertheless, this year's graduating class was the largest in the history of the program (149) with all but three students accepted into college and planning to go. (Two of the three students not going to college decided to attend trade school. The third has been out of communication.)

The success of this program is due to the efforts of many different people. First, recognition must go to the college counselors, Zakiya Edens and Carla Hawkins who are tireless, resilient, and persistent, and to the volunteer mentors who are so diligent and generous with their time.

Career Beginnings could not function were it not for the support of the Consortium campuses and of key individuals who open their doors and provide space for our workshops.

Four individuals stand out and my thanks goes out to Dennis Seymour (UConn), Bettyanne Janelle (Saint Joseph College), Nick Lentino (Goodwin College) and Matt Blocker (UHART).

Career Beginnings works with Weaver HS, Bulkeley HS, Hartford Public, A.I. Prince Tech, Bloomfield HS, East Hartford HS, Pathways to Technology Magnet, Sports and Medical Sciences Academy, and University High School of Science and Engineering. The collaboration of key individuals at these campuses makes our work possible.

Finally, we thank our funders who have seen the value of our work for so many years and have been so generous with financial support.

Since 1986,
92% of Career
Beginnings
graduates
have gone on
the college
directly out of
high school.

Graduate!Connecticut

Sharing offices and administration with Career Beginnings is a new educational initiative, Graduate!CT. This program is sponsored by the MetroHartford Alliance, the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education and eight partner colleges and universities. The program works with adult learners, primarily those who have started college but have not completed degrees. The program advises adults who want to return to learning, helps them re-enroll and sticks with them until the degree is attained.

Martin Estey, director of the Career Beginnings program, will act as director of Higher Educational Partnerships with GICT. Merly del Castillo, who is a Career Beginnings mentor, is the program advisor for GICT. For more information, contact Merly at 860 702-3800 or mdelcastillo@metrohartford.com.

This new program is open to Career Beginnings graduates who attend the partner colleges and who will now have access to support while in college. The partner colleges are: Central Connecticut State, University of Hartford, Capital Community College, Saint Joseph College, Goodwin College, Charter Oak State College, Trinity College, and University of Connecticut.

Career Beginnings Mission and History

The Career Beginnings program began in 1986 as a program of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education. The mission of Career Beginnings is to increase the percentage of Hartford-area students who go to college directly after high school and on to fulfilling careers. Since 1986, on average, 92% of Career Beginnings graduates go to college after high school. *In 2010, 98% of our graduating class will attend college in the fall.*

The Career Beginnings program offers one-on-one advising, after school workshops, and a mentoring program. Mentors are adults with college experience who volunteer for one year to work with a senior in high school to help him or her through the college application process.



A program of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education

Please note our new address and contact information!

Career Beginnings

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Zakiya Edens: College Counselor

Fran Kallaugher: Staff Assistant

Our Funders

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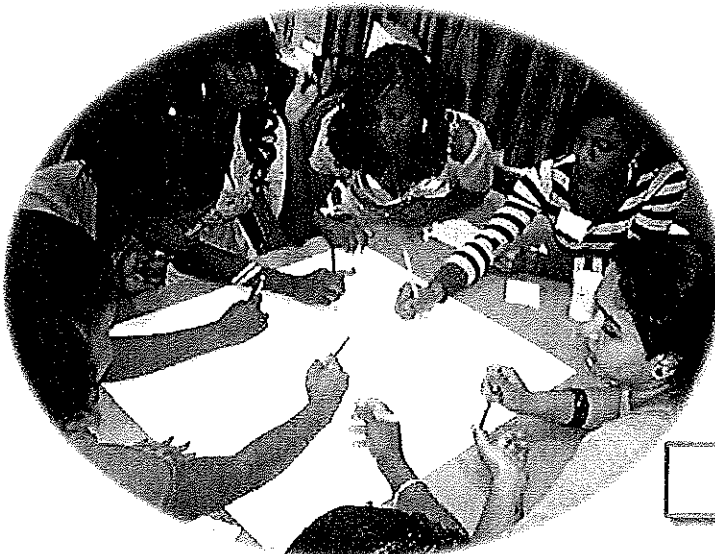
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Travelers

Since 1986, the Career Beginnings program has been 100% grant funded. We thank our funders who make this important work possible! Career Beginnings is a proud participant in the Travelers EDGE program.



Members of the Class of 2011