



## EXPANDING THE GEOGRAPHY OF OPPORTUNITY IN EAST NEW YORK FEBRUARY 2018

All New Yorkers should have equal opportunity to achieve prosperity and social mobility. Expanding opportunity for our children, youth, and families has tangible social and economic benefits for us all. But in reality, geography can play a major role in determining one's opportunity for health, well-being and future success.<sup>1</sup> In the Brooklyn and Bronx communities where Good Shepherd Services (GSS) programs are concentrated, children, youth, and families are disconnected from resources and opportunities that are available to those in higher income neighborhoods. Through a network of strategically located youth and family development, child welfare, and educational support programs, GSS seeks to address these structural disparities and expand the geography of opportunity in our city.

Serving more than **30,000 participants annually** in New York City's most under-resourced neighborhoods, our Youth and Family Development approach is informed by a substantial body of empirical evidence on effective strategies that mitigate the impacts of poverty and improve social mobility. This research highlights the transformational impact of targeting specific neighborhoods, enhancing developmental opportunities afforded within those communities, and building the capacity of residents to create positive community change. Drawing from this research and our decades of experience in holistic and community-based service provision, we provide targeted and coordinated programs that address basic needs, promote belonging, build on family strengths, foster leadership skills and civic involvement, improve academic achievement, and strengthen job readiness.

### Establishing a Network of Programs in East New York

Our expanding work in East New York (ENY) began in 2012 with the acquisition of Groundwork, a smaller youth development organization that approached GSS due to financial difficulty. This was our first step in establishing a network of GSS youth and family development programs in one of New York City's most severely under-resourced communities. Over the past five years, we have deepened our work in ENY by engaging larger numbers of participants, offering enhanced evidence-based programming, and broadening our array of programs to address unmet needs.

### EAST NEW YORK

Located in the eastern section of Brooklyn, East New York (ENY) experienced a protracted period of economic decline following the post-World War II flight of manufacturing jobs out of NYC. Youth growing up in ENY today lack resources crucial to healthy development and face significant challenges on the road to adulthood. ENY receives **a score of very low on the Child Opportunity Index**, a composite measure of critical health, environmental, social, and economic opportunities afforded by a community.<sup>2</sup> Individual indicators of community stress from census and state administrative data for ENY consistently reveal higher than average rates of extreme poverty, unemployment, disconnected youth, violent crime, child abuse and foster care placement. In fact, more than one-fifth of residents in ENY live in extreme poverty, compared to 9.3% citywide.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acevedo-Garcia, D., T. L., N. & Williams, D.R. (2008). Toward a Policy-Relevant Analysis of Geographic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Child Health, *Health Affairs*, 27 (2), 321-333. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/27/2/321.abstract>

<sup>2</sup> Index created through partnership between Brandeis University and Ohio State University. For more information, see <http://www.diversitydatakids.org/>

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey, <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

## GSS Network of Youth and Family Development Programs in East New York

Guided by our organizational mission, assessment of community needs; and partnership with city agencies, other community providers, and funders, our current programs in ENY include: a Single Stop; a community school; college prep, workforce development, youth justice, family strengthening, and afterschool programs; a Youth Reception Center; and a new community center set to open this spring.

❖ **Single Stop.** Serving nearly 2,000 individuals and families annually, our Single Stop center connects residents with crucial benefits and counseling and referral services. This “one-stop shop” program links individuals and families to the public service resources they need to attain education goals, find jobs, and achieve financial stability. Single Stop centers also offer legal counseling, help with financial planning, and referrals to other community-based organizations, as needed.

❖ **Afterschool.** We have expanded the number of youth served in afterschool programming. This includes new middle school contracts obtained through Mayor Bill de Blasio’s SONYC initiative. All of our afterschools implement a program model that uses social group work and cooperative learning techniques to deliver a rich array of activities and evidence-supported curricula. **Our ENY afterschool programs served 425 elementary and middle school students in 2017; 85% reported a strong sense of belonging and 84% said that they developed leadership skills.**



❖ **Groundwork for Success (GWS).** Serving 100 youth scholars annually, GWS is an innovative college preparation program that helps students access competitive colleges and universities and prepares them to succeed. Started in 2004, the program combines academic instruction and support, personal development, and college preparation. In contrast to many college preparation programs that focus their interventions toward the end of high school, a key feature of the program’s design is that GWS staff begin working with 9<sup>th</sup> graders—and some 8<sup>th</sup> graders—allowing for a long-term investment in each participant. **In 2016-17, 100% of graduating seniors enrolled in an accredited college. Those who enroll, persist; 94% of the 2015-2016 cohort of grads who enrolled in college were still enrolled a year later.**

❖ **Community Schools.** Good Shepherd operates a community school at JHS 292. Rooted in the understanding that non-academic factors such as poverty, lack of access to health care, and other environmental factors must be addressed in order for students to succeed academically, the Community Schools initiative has allowed us to extend our partnered work with the DOE and enhance our school-based services to students, their families, and the community.

❖ **Youth Workforce Development.** Nearly one in five young people, ages 16 to 24, in East New York are disconnected – neither in school, nor working – and excluded from pathways to steady employment and mobility. Good Shepherd’s workforce model combines what we know about youth development with what employers need, incorporating evidence-based practices to create employer-driven opportunities that lead to better attachment to the workforce.

- **Rebound** uses basketball and dance to engage disconnected or ambivalent young people, ages 16-24, as the foundation for teaching teamwork and leadership. Participants develop social and emotional skills while enhancing their job readiness through structured workshops and one-on-one coaching. Rebound graduates are encouraged to enroll in Good Shepherd’s ACE program or other sector-based training if they haven’t found viable employment or enrolled in college. **In FY17, the program served**

nearly 150 young people. Despite three-quarters of Rebound participants being disconnected from work and school at entry, nearly three-quarters achieved employment or accessed further education upon leaving.

- **Academic and Career Enrichment (ACE)** is a sector-based employment program that serves young people, ages 17-24, in GSS' transformational mentoring programs for justice-involved youth and young people leaving Rikers Island. ACE combines job coaching and on-the-ground experience at an apprenticeship, with an in-house high-school equivalency course, partnerships with programs that provide industry-specific trainings, and deep ties to local employers in the community who are looking to fill entry-level openings. Apprenticeship tracks have included porter training and aviation services, and will include an in-house barber shop in the coming year. The program was launched in 2016 and has served **96 participants** to date.
- ❖ **Youth Justice Programs.** Incorporating several evidence-supported practices and interventions, we have developed a range of community-based and residential programming for justice-involved youth and their families in ENY. Our programs provide case management and support in navigating the justice system and attaining educational and work readiness goals. Our staff are credible messengers – skilled mentors with shared backgrounds from the community who intentionally use their experiences to bring about transformational change with participants. **In FY16, 90% of participants in our community-based programs avoided deeper justice system involvement during the program, 81% furthered their education or career, and 70% strengthened their adult support, and 62% improved their emotional regulation.** Current programs include:
  - **Advocate, Intervene, Mentor (AIM)** is a mentoring-focused intervention designed to enable participants and their families to address age-specific needs and issues, become knowledgeable about opportunities and resources that can assist them, and develop positive bonds within their community that will lead to productive adulthood; since 2012, AIM has served **59 participants**.
  - **Arches** is an evidence-based group mentoring intervention that helps justice-involved young adults transform the attitudes and behaviors that have led to criminal activity. This program uses the evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral Interactive Journaling curriculum, an experiential writing process, to guide behavioral change. Since the program's inception in 2012, Arches has served **219 participants**, first in Bedford-Stuyvesant and since expanding to East New York and Brownsville.
  - **Next Steps** is a curriculum-based group mentoring intervention that helps youth prone to violence transform the attitudes and behaviors that have led them off track. This program also uses Interactive Journaling. Next Steps targets those living in New York City Housing Authority developments. It has operated since January 2015 and it has served **136 participants** to date.
  - **Group Homes for Justice-Involved Youth.** Developed as part of NYC's Close-to-Home Initiative, our group homes in East New York are designed for youth, ages 15-17, who have been placed in our care by Family Court. They enable residents to live near their families and communities. Implementing both the Sanctuary Model and the Missouri Model, the residences create a trauma-informed community with therapeutic services offered in a small, home-like setting.
    - **Rose House** is a 12-bed, girls' residential placement program. It has served **35 youth** since opening in 2015.
    - **Barbara Blum** is a 12-bed, boys' residential placement program. It serves approximately **25 youth** each year.
- ❖ **Youth Reception Center (YRC)** is a 24-hour short-term/emergency placement center for adolescent girls, ages 14 to 21, who are awaiting placement into foster care. GSS works with ACS to ensure these youth are quickly placed in the most appropriate level of care. Since opening in 2016, the YRC has served **55 youth**.
- ❖ **Family Enrichment Center (FEC).** Our Family Enrichment Center is part of ACS' continuum of preventive services, with a goal to engage families in programming to build resilience, create connections



and reduce the risk of child trauma. The Center identifies and builds the capacity of leaders from the community to support neighborhood families related to health and wellbeing, economic mobility, parenting, social connections, housing, child development and education, community engagement and advocacy.

❖ **NEW Community Center.** Row after row of public housing without the advantage of a community center led GSS to consider building one which will serve several housing complexes. The creation of a center, a strategic priority for GSS, was made possible with support of the City and individuals. Scheduled to open in spring 2018, GSS has constructed a state-of-the-art, 19,500 square foot community center that will **serve approximately 2,000 youth and families annually** through a range of activities, with the goal of contributing to the social capital, strength, and vibrancy of residents and the larger neighborhood. GSS will share the new Prince Joshua Avitto Community Center space with ManUp! Inc., a local non-profit organization with a mission to serve urban neighborhoods as a multi-cultural, social service agency for neighborhood improvement.



In addition, we encourage ENY youth to access educational programs offered by GSS elsewhere in Brooklyn. Our alternative high school programs include Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) and Partnership Schools, which focus on helping overage, under-credited youth get back on track and earn their high school diploma. LifeLink is our three-phase college access and success program that promotes engagement and success in achieving key milestones from pre-enrollment through college graduation.

*GSS’s expanding network of programs in ENY illustrates our longstanding commitment to providing integrated educational, family, and community services and supports that enhance opportunities for children, youth, and families living in under-resourced NYC neighborhoods. In concert with our provision of services, we seek to enhance our impact by developing and codifying innovative programs, which can be replicated by other providers. We also engage in advocacy at all levels of government to address public policies that help to shape opportunity in our communities. We look forward to our continued collaboration and partnership with the community, other providers, and city government.*

**To Learn More**

To learn more about Good Shepherd Services programs, please contact Kathy Gordon, Associate Executive Director, at [kathy\\_gordon@goodshepherds.org](mailto:kathy_gordon@goodshepherds.org) or visit our website: [www.goodshepherds.org](http://www.goodshepherds.org). This report was prepared by Program Evaluation and Planning and External Relations at Good Shepherd Services.

**East New York Community-Based Partnerships**

- *Betty Shabazz Health Center*
- *Brooklyn Women’s Center*
- *Catholic Charities*
- *CHANGER*
- *Community Coalition of East New York*
- *Community Minded Organization*
- *Cypress Hills LDC*
- *East New York Clubhouse*
- *East New York Farms*
- *Empowering Youth Towards Education*
- *ENY Diagnostic & Treatment Center (HHC)*
- *Institution: Excellence Foundation for Parents & Children Inc.*
- *Man Up! Inc.*
- *Network of Angels*
- *New Creation Ministry*
- *Partnership for the Homeless*
- *Women’s Prison Association*
- *United Community Centers*
- *University Settlement*