

WHAT WE STAND FOR WHAT WE STAND FOR WHAT WE STAND FOR

Good Shepherd Services respects the dignity and worth of every person and rejects intolerance, inequity and injustice in whatever form it may take. We value black lives and the lives of all people of color. We stand with our LGBTQ community members, with immigrants, with refugees, with indigenous peoples, and with peoples of all faiths. We stand in community and together with all persons who are the targets of intolerance, inequity and injustice. We are against hate in all of its forms, and we stand in firm opposition to any action, statement, or belief that seeks to deny individuals of dignity, respect, rights, or opportunities.

We see what can be.



www.goodshepherds.org



Their Unity is Powerful

It’s awe-inspiring to witness the power of forward-thinking youth who are driven to take action. A new generation of thinkers who are eager to impact change and disrupt the status-quo are taking a critical look at their environment with a goal of achieving cultural and social advancement in their communities. Our annual Youth Summit is the forum that helps make that happen.

The Youth Summit is an energetic youth-led event that brings together about 150 promising teens from over 20 Good Shepherd programs to exchange ideas, share critical thought, and coalesce around topics of importance to them. Led by a Youth Leadership team comprised of bright scholars representing several schools, students work for months to determine a theme, select topics, prepare research, and create a presentation.

In 2016, their theme was *No Age for Change* and this year they chose *Our Unity is Power* recognizing that a synergistic approach to social justice yields greater progress.

“To me, Our Unity is Power means a bunch of strong people are able to make changes because we all know that individually we’re amazing, but as one unit we could be the best thing that happens on the face of the earth,” one student said at the event followed by roaring cheers.

Topics from this year’s event included Understanding and Coping with the Effects of Violence and Food Deserts in Low-Income Neighborhoods. Each team presented their findings followed by a Q & A session which allowed the audience of high schoolers, volunteers, and Good Shepherd staff to delve deeper into the topics. Youth Summit provides a platform for adolescents to build confidence, work collaboratively, manage projects, and present publicly. When a young person is given the tools to become a leader, magic happens and communities evolve.



The Bronx Rises

NYC is a mammoth metropolis that’s a haven for inspiration and opportunity. Despite its wonderful attributes, there exists a microcosm that reveals a less savory tale. In neighborhoods across the boroughs, residents are grappling with an epidemic of gun violence. In response, we implemented the Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) program in 2015, zeroing in on the hardest hit areas. As of June 1, B.R.A.G. is celebrating almost 500 days without gun violence and the staff on the frontlines are our everyday heroes.

Staunchly devoted to instilling a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution in the 12-25 year old population they serve, the team regularly cavasses the area within the 46th Precinct to raise awareness, build relationships, and stay in the mix. Well-trained and personally invested in the effort, most of the B.R.A.G. team members are working their first-ever full-time job.

“This job offers so much. It feeds me in a way I’ve never been fed before. It keeps me on my toes and something good happens every day,” said Outreach Coordinator Maggie Nunez who started this position less than a year ago.

Maggie has found a future at Good Shepherd. The participants, who sometimes refer to her as “Mama B.R.A.G.,” value their interaction with staff so much so that they express disappointment when the office is closed on holidays.

“These kids have been misguided. They just want to be heard. I encourage them to complete school and dream big,” Maggie said.

B.R.A.G. uses an evidence-based anti-violence model called Cure Violence. Our B.R.A.G. Violence Interrupters work to avert gun-related crime and mobilize the community through shooting responses and monthly events while promoting norms that reject violence.



Each One Teach One

Good Shepherd Services cultivates youth voice because we know young people are capable beyond their age of exemplifying the change they want to see in the world. Over the past several years, there has been an emergence of youth activism spurred by a series of high-profile cases involving police fatally shooting unarmed people of color. New voices are fighting old battles and a group of students from our Men in Progress (MIP) and Women on the Move (WOM) programs at Boys & Girls High School in Brooklyn are using their influence to educate their peers on how to interact safely with law enforcement through their group called The Right Project.

In an effort to improve community relations and in an attempt to reduce negative interactions with police, The Right Project provides a comprehensive guide on how to interact with police based on shared experiences within communities of color.

“I want people to show compassion when they view our website. The Right Project is our perspective of police brutality and I want people to understand how we feel about this issue that affects our community”, said co-founder Gabriel Nurse.

Men in Progress and Women on the Move are four-year college readiness programs that prepare students for success in high school and college through academic support, mentoring, college prep activities, and internships. The programs are built upon the themes of brotherhood and sisterhood respectively to re-envision what it means to be a man and woman of color in today’s society.

While some people underestimate youth as merely hashtag activists who are quick to jump on a political bandwagon, our students prove that they are driving change through action.



Together We Grow

The true measure of a great organization exists in its ability to take a critical look within itself and be flexible and open to change. Over the last year, Good Shepherd Services has taken steps to examine and address racial inequities, their impact, and any existing structures within the agency that perpetuate them. To move us forward in making conscious and deliberate efforts to promote equity, in February we formed the Leadership, Equity, Accountability, and Diversity (L.E.A.D.) Council.

L.E.A.D. is comprised of 34 members of staff representing a cross-section of employment levels, ages, ethnicities, and race. L.E.A.D.’s goal is to further develop a mindset of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout our agency with a special interest in creating opportunities for the advancement of people of color to key decision-making roles at the most senior levels. Building leadership and carving a lane for ascension among the ranks will allow the organization to introduce fresh and unique perspectives that will strengthen policy and infrastructure. A trauma-informed approach is being used to better understand the impact of racism and respond with practices that foster healing and transformation.

Although L.E.A.D. has its own membership body, communication with and support of the whole organization is encouraged and critical to successful implementation of new initiatives that will emerge from L.E.A.D.’s work. We are taking many small steps as we work toward a large goal of understanding bias in all of its forms and creating a cultural shift that aligns better with our values and the communities we serve.

In the coming months, an Undoing Racism workshop, already experienced by the Senior Leadership Team, is expected to be rolled out to all members of staff. This means having the courage to be open to participating in raw conversations that explore behaviors and attitudes that impede our work and our evolution as an organization.