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Working Hard in the Bronx: the Rosedale Summer Job-Training Program

"Summer fun" for Rosedale Achievement Center's high school girls means getting up early, working hard from 9:00 – 12:00, taking classes from 1:00 – 4:00 and going home tired, happy and with money in their pockets.

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The Concept

Rosedale's Summer Job-Training Program provides girls with an opportunity to develop the skills they need in the workplace, and helps them get jobs where they'll use those skills. It is one of a number of programs run by the Rosedale Achievement Center in the South Bronx, which also offers tutoring and achievement and character development programs. The center was founded by members of Opus Dei 20 years ago, with the goal of bringing about academic, professional, and personal development of girls and young women in New York City.

In their classes at the Summer Job-Training Program, the girls learn about filing, typing, computer programs, telephone skills, business writing, business ethics, and career planning. In their internships, they get a chance to put these skills into effect, and earn some money too.

Since Summer 2000, when the work placement feature of the program was implemented, 40 Rosedale high school girls have been placed in part-time positions in companies such as: McGraw Hill, Tommy Hilfiger, J. P. Morgan, Mediterranean Shipping, Success Image, and various insurance companies in Westchester County. This summer, several Allstate Insurance Agencies joined Rosedale's training program as participating employers.

Here's an account of Summer 2002:

The Players *Melissa Mitchum*, a junior at Aquinas High School in the Bronx, worked as an office assistant in the Larchmont career counseling firm, Success Image, Inc. "This job requires a person who is pleasant, patient, hard working and strong-willed. My responsibilities were organizing files and resumes and entering clients' information into the

company's database. I was able to fulfill the requirements set for me to a certain extent. I still have work to do in certain areas, for example, choosing the college I would like to attend and making a career decision.”

“Since I worked at a career counseling center, it has influenced me to go to college and from there to move on to my career choice. During my internship at Success Image I learned to advance my computer skills and better understand how to find a career that fits who you are as a person.”

La Starr Andrews, a junior at Wings Public School in the Bronx, worked at Allstate Insurance Company in Larchmont. “My responsibilities at Allstate were faxing, making copies, filing endorsements, checking to see if the information on the endorsements was correct in the

computer system, and answering the phone and taking messages.”

“During my internship I learned to mingle and work with people very much older than myself. I also learned that some people get angry when you call their house because their payments are overdue. These lessons were very helpful: I will never be afraid to go to a job that I know nothing about. My internship let me know that you need to make the grades in school in order to make big money and love the job you do.”

The Rosedale girls learned “on the job”, but also at the Center. A dedicated team of young, enthusiastic and energetic teachers were not only role models for the girls. In a class room, hands-on setting they taught them some basic skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

Ana Ingelmo, a business graduate from Barcelona, Spain, ran daily seminars in business ethics and character building skills. Using lessons from *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, girls studied themes such as: honesty, hard work, pro-activity, faith, willpower, understanding and commitment.

Roxana Garcia, a senior in the Business Department of Rider University, New Jersey, taught classes in Word, Excel, Power Point and Access. She says: “I think the program is great! The girls are now able to do memos and make presentations and charts on the computer. They are also more talkative, self-confident and have better attitudes in general.” The girls’ closing project consisted of Power Point presentations of their business plans.

Martha Tam, a PA from Columbia University, and *Christie Principe*, a NYS Board of Ed teacher, worked individually with each girl to help her create a resume, do a personal evaluation and set college and career goals.

The results *Supervisors' evaluations* speak volumes of the success of the girls in the program. These are some of the remarks at the end of the Rosedale students' internships.

“With minimal instruction, she was able to carry tasks through on her own and deal directly with our vendors. Her diligence was an example to many older staff members.”

“It was a pleasure having her here. She is well-organized and detail-oriented...She is unflappable and displays a professional manner for one so young.”

“She is an excellent addition to our office... very quick to learn... Please clone her!”

The *Good News* is that La Starr and Melissa, along with the other girls, have been invited back to work at their summer offices during winter and spring breaks. A big thanks to these and the other participating companies in the Rosedale Job Training Program: Amatulli & Sons, New Canaan, CT; The Catery and Burbank/Whittemore Real Estate of Larchmont, NY; and the Dental Offices of Karen Gear and Mediterranean Shipping, both of Manhattan.