

The Way to Work

Newsletter
Summer 2006

Vocational Foundation Inc.
Est. 1936

From the CEO

Since 1936, Vocational Foundation, Inc. (VFI) has been assisting “disconnected-youth” from New York City who are out of school and out of work to gain the skills and tools they need to achieve financial independence through full-time employment. To date, VFI has helped over 170,000 hard to place youth ages 17-21 continue their education and find meaningful jobs. It is unimaginable that every year in New York City nearly 200,000 young people are out of school and unemployed. Of those who do find work, 43% will lose their jobs within the first 30 days of



Hector Batista, CEO

being hired because they lack the most basic skills. It is estimated that in 2006, another 30,000 students will drop out of high school in New York City.

Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of VFI staff over the past eleven months, together we have re-established VFI as a leader in the youth workforce development field by attaining dramatic improvement in sustainable performance outcomes. Indeed, with our recently imple-

mented operations management and program development enhancements, VFI has begun to chart a course to significantly increase enrollment over the next few years.

We hope that you will take time out of your busy schedule to visit us in our newly expanded corporate headquarters located just south of Wall Street! Only with your generous support are we now able to provide an even greater number of New York City's most disadvantaged youth with the education and training necessary to find “The Way to Work.”



Hector Batista

SUCCESS STORY



VFI graduate Ebony M. is currently employed at Chase

Ebony M. came to VFI as a 19 year-old single, young mother who spent many years in the foster care system. In and out of various foster care residences since she was 13 years old, Ebony arrived with certain goals in mind – to get her GED, land a good paying job, find an apartment and create a new life for herself and her 4 year-old son. When Ebony enrolled in VFI, she had to make many personal adjustments.

At first she struggled with attendance and punctuality, but through the coaching of her Career Manager, she was able to manage her time more efficiently. Ebony received good grades in her skills training class, and continued to increase her reading and math levels. Ebony enrolled in VFI with a 6th grade reading level.

When she exited VFI's rigorous program six months later, she was reading at the 11th grade level. While Ebony continues to prepare for the GED exam, she has been employed at Chase for the past six months, and is earning \$10.75 per hour.

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The Way to Work

MILESTONES

Since being hired as Chief Executive Officer of VFI almost a year ago, **Hector Batista** has successfully stabilized the institution by promoting from within, recruiting talented new employees, bringing back a key employee and creating new positions. He next restructured the workforce and career departments, improved recruitment and added a **new career track, Security Guard training.**

One of his most significant accomplishments was orchestrating a **cost-neutral move for VFI to lower Manhattan into larger facilities** at a lower cost per square foot. As a result of these dramatic changes, VFI has also reduced its cost per participant. The new facility allows VFI to increase its training capacity by 38%, enabling VFI to serve a projected 82 additional vocational students in 2006 with the potential of serving up to 500 trainees in future years.

Mr. Batista also initiated a highly successful partnership with the **New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)** that resulted in the enrollment of 218 participants for calendar year 2005 into VFI's core job training program (110 in Spring '05 and 108 in Fall '05). Thanks to the new NYCHA partnership, new site and new Security Guard training program, VFI enrolled 150 participants in the Spring 2006 cycle—an increase of 39% over the previous cycle. Also, thanks to these enhancements, the proportion of males served by VFI has increased from 37% in Fall '05 to 45% in Spring '06. In VFI's acclaimed *Moving Up* retention program, our goal for the last pro-

gram year was to serve at least 300 recent and past graduates. VFI has exceeded its target by 44%, serving a total of **433 alumni.**

79 out of 108 participants enrolled in the Fall 2005 cycle completed the training program, for a **graduation rate of 73%.** Using this as a baseline, VFI has set the graduation rate goal for the current Spring 2006 cycle at 73% (or 110 graduates out of 150 enrollees).

Additionally, most low performing students **increased their TABE score by one to two grade levels.** A number of participants from the Spring and Fall 2005 cycles jumped from the 6th grade reading level to the 11th or 12th grade level, from the 5th grade reading level to the 9th grade reading level and from the 8th grade to 12th grade reading level within a six-month period.

At the request of Hector Batista and with funding from the **Edna McConnell Clark Foundation**, this past spring **Public/Private Ventures (P/PV)** conducted an assessment of the VFI program that included data analysis, observations, focus groups and interviews with staff, board, students, alumni, and employers. The study was completed in June and presented to the VFI Board of Directors. VFI has used P/PV's recommendations as a basis for its two-year strategic goals.

Under Mr. Batista's leadership, VFI has recently secured funding from the **van Ameringen Foundation, Inc.** to enable VFI to hire a clinical social worker. Under the supervision of the Director of Career Managers, this new staff position will provide on-site professional counseling to VFI clients with various emotional and behavioral problems. As a member of VFI's holistic wrap-around case management team, the social worker will work closely with the Career Managers to conduct assessments during the intake process and help reduce any barriers to training program participation or employment. An important role for the staff social worker will be to provide professional development/skills-building and on-going support to staff members who work directly with the young people.

Similarly, during this fiscal year that began on July 1st, VFI plans to conduct a feasibility analysis on providing **on-site child care**, which could be linked to a possible new vocational training and placement track in early childhood development, or alternatively, partnering with an outside agency to provide this service to VFI participants both off-site and/or on-site.

With new fundraising initiatives such as our highly successful first annual Golf Outing, recruitment of new board members, a drive to increase board and individual giving, and additional corporate and foundation support, VFI has begun the new fiscal year with high goals for even greater success.

Calendar of Events

Spring and Summer of 2006

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Grand Opening | May 18 |
| College Fair | May 24 |
| Board of Directors Meeting | June 13 |
| Career Fair | July 10 |
| VFI Picnic | July 14 |
| Graduation | August 24 |
| New Cycle Begins | Mid-September |

2007 Events

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 70th Anniversary Gala | Feb 07 |
| 2007 Golf Outing | May 07 |

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JEANNE THAYER VISITS VFI



Jeanne Thayer and VFI students

On June 9, 2006 **Jeanne Thayer**, widow of VFI founder **Walter N. Thayer**, visited VFI's new headquarters at 52 Broadway in lower Manhattan. She was immediately struck by the address, so close to where Walter began his career as a young lawyer, determined to realize his dream in the creation of an organization that would transform lives of disadvantaged young people from hopelessness to dignity and economic independence. "He would be so proud of how far his dream has traveled, and for how many lives it has given a future of hope."

Joined by her daughters, Board Members **Susan Thayer Noble** and **Ann W. Thayer**, CEO **Hector Batista**, and Board Chair **Nicholas M. Brown, Jr.**, Mrs. Thayer toured the new facility and visited several classrooms to meet students and reminisce about her husband's vision.

In a letter to Friends of VFI, Mrs. Thayer wrote, "This is as eloquent a testimony to Vocational Foundation as Walter would have wished. We are all proud of what has been accomplished. It is a vivid triumph, and an everlasting honor to his memory."

VFI Services

In addition to the 300 plus VFI graduates who receive two years of work retention through our nationally recognized *Moving Up* program, each year VFI provides an additional 300 young people ages 17 to 21 with the following comprehensive set of services:

- Vocational classroom training in growth occupations
 - ◆ Medical Office Assistant
 - ◆ Security Guard/Public Safety
 - ◆ Office Support Specialist
 - ◆ Bank Teller
 - ◆ Customer Service/Retail
- Literacy, math, and GED test prep
- Work readiness/soft skills training
- Individualized assessment, case management and counseling
- Internship and job placement
- Two years of work retention

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NEW HEADQUARTERS

On May 18, 2006, after 5 years in Brooklyn, VFI returned to Manhattan, hosting one hundred guests at a ribbon-cutting event at its new headquarters. Speakers included UFT President **Randi Weingarten**, NYC Comptroller **William C. Thompson, Jr.**, NYC Council Member **Robert Jackson**, VFI's Board Chair **Nick Brown** and CEO **Hector Batista**. The guest speakers pledged support to VFI as partners in a city-wide effort to connect out-of-school and out-of-work youth to jobs and educational opportunities.



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at new VFI Headquarters. From left to right, Nicholas M. Brown, Jr. VFI Board Chair; VFI CEO Hector Batista; NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr.; UFT President Randi Weingarten; VFI Board President, Ann W. Thayer; VFI Trustee Edward Barlow; and VFI Board Member Susan Thayer Noble

The new facility is located on the sixth floor of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) building at 52 Broadway. The build-out of the new space was done by MJF Architecture PC, and purposefully designed to provide VFI participants with a professional, work-oriented atmosphere, rather than a traditional school setting. Through the leadership of VFI Board Chair **Nick Brown** and CEO **Hector Batista**, VFI leveraged grants of \$200,000 and \$75,000 respectively from the **Robin Hood Foundation** and the **Booth Ferris Foundation**, \$916,960 and \$360,000 respectively negotiated with the **UFT** and **HSBC Bank**, and received a \$68,500 in-kind contribution of staff computers from **Hewlett Packard** to accomplish the move.



From top left, UFT President Randi Weingarten, NYC Councilman Robert Jackson, VFI CEO Hector Batista, NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr., and VFI Consultant Suri Kasirer at the Grand Opening

The larger space increases VFI's training capacity by 38%, enabling VFI to serve a projected 82 additional vocational students in 2006 with the potential to serve up to 500 trainees in future years by expanding into additional space on the sixth floor.

Located in the heart of the financial district, the new location is easily accessible to all five boroughs and will serve to help VFI participants visualize a path towards future employment.

The Way to Work



The Way to Work mural located in the entrance area of the new VFI headquarters

Photo by Kevin Chu/KCJP

The new Student Lounge at 52 Broadway



Photo by Kevin Chu/KCJP



VFI's new Reception Area

Photo by Kevin Chu/KCJP

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1ST ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

On May 22, VFI began a new tradition, hosting the First Annual Golf Classic at the beautiful Ardsley Country Club in Westchester. 27 foursomes enjoyed playing the challenging course, then returned to the clubhouse for refreshments and a buffet dinner. A live auction followed the dinner, and helped VFI reach its goal of \$100,000 net for the event.

NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr. was the guest of honor. Two members of the current class at VFI came to the podium and movingly shared stories of success over the many obstacles and difficult conditions they have faced throughout their lives.

VFI credits the hard-working co-chairs, **Samuel Ramirez, CEO, Ramirez & Co.** and **Dominick Antonelli, CEO, Roosevelt and Cross, Inc.** for guiding VFI so successfully through the initial stages of this new fundraising venture. Both men have signed on as co-chairs for next year's outing. Plans are already underway for a bigger and better event and we hope to see you on the links next spring. For information, please call Paul W. Goldberg, Chief Development Officer at 212-823-1041.



CEO Hector Batista and NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr. welcome participants to the 1st Annual Golf Classic at the Ardsley Country Club.

THANKS TO OUR GOLF SPONSORS

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COLLEGE FAIR

On Wednesday, May 24th, 2006, VFI held its bi-annual **College Exploration Fair**. The event began with a formal welcome introduction by Jonathan Escobar, Recruitment Specialist, explaining VFI's mission, history and program services offered. Visitors from the colleges were then invited on a quick tour of our new facility.

Over 100 current trainees and retention students participated in this interactive event. Many of the trainees sat with school representatives, and discussed the courses offered at their colleges. The colleges in attendance included **LaGuardia Community College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Medgar Evers College, Hostos Community College, Bronx Community College, Kingsborough Community College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NYC College of Technology, Brooklyn College, Metropolitan College of NY, Berkeley College, DeVry University, Boricua College, Monroe College, York College, St. Francis College** and **ASA Institute**.

The event concluded with a personal thank you from CEO Hector Batista on behalf of the trainees and staff of VFI.



Literacy Instructor Frederick Gonzalez makes a point to VFI students at VFI's new headquarters in Lower Manhattan

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND LITERACY NEWS

VFI vocational instructors have been preparing our youth for the world of work and the literacy instructors have been prepping for the GED and college exams. 30 clients received their GED from the June test and 10 clients received their GED from the February test date.

The new track of Security and Safety Guard training recently finished their 10-week course and are being placed into security positions.

The clients have completed their resumes and VFI staff has been assisting with mock interviews. The youth are working with the workforce managers on obtaining jobs and becoming successful members of the workforce.

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VFI JOB FAIR A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

VFI welcomed more than 20 employers to its first **2006 Job Fair** on Tuesday, July 11. An event which took four months in the making was a tremendous success!

Over 130 alumni and trainees took part in the three-hour event, which was attended by recruiters from **Federal Express, Metropolitan Transit Authority, Crowne Plaza Times Square, Bank of New York, Bank of America, CHASE, UPS, Macy's Herald Square, Patient Care,** and others.

The large conference hall adjacent to VFI's offices (the space was graciously provided by the **United Federation of Teachers**) was buzzing with excitement and anticipation, as many of VFI's clients completed applications with employers and interviewed. Also participating in the free job placement event were clients from a special **NYC Administration for Children's Services program.**

A special thanks to VFI Director of Student Services, **Anthony Flores** and workforce management staff **John Hickson, D. Keith Booker, Jonathan Escobar, Stacie Bethea** and **Liz Gold** for their hard work in organizing the event.



VFI participants meet with corporate recruiters at the VFI Job Fair

NEW EMPLOYERS

VFI's team of Workforce Managers has added a total of 21 new employers to its job bank. The average placement wage for this group of firms is \$8.86/hour.

Aegis Communications Group

The Alex Hotel

Americare

Apple Bank

Bank of New York

BJ's Wholesale Warehouse

Cablevision

D&W Central Station Alarm Co.

Dr. Klein Dental Practice

Kit Middleton P.C.

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MEDFAX

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Raddison Hotel

Uptown Medical

The UPS Store

Video Overseas, Inc.

Washington Inventory, Inc.

Washington Mutual Bank

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NEW TRAINING TRACK

In order to increase the percentage of males served by our program, increase the number of participants served, and prepare young people for a growing sector in the economy, this year VFI launched a new **Security Guard** training track. The ten-week course is licensed by the State of New York to train licensed security officers and provides participants with five industry certifications including the required eight-hour basic Security Guard training, the required, more advanced sixteen-hour Security Guard training, Disaster Basics and Emergency Evacuations (FEMA-certified), and a ten-hour course in Terrorism Awareness/Prevention.

The first cycle of the Security Guard pilot project, which ended on May 25th, was a success. A total of 15 participants, mostly young males, enrolled in the course. Thirteen of the trainees completed the program, for a graduation rate of 87%. While the majority of graduates are currently waiting for their Security Guard License to come back from Albany in order to gain employment, a number of students have been placed, pending licensing, within three companies: **Elite Investigations**, **McRoberts**, and **Securitas**. VFI now plans to offer three cycles of this shorter course per year with about 15-20 participants in each class.



Students at work with Computer Technology Instructor Hal Allen on the first day in new VFI classroom at 52 Broadway

SUCCESS STORY

Yvette R.

Yvette R. came to VFI as a 17-year-old single, young mother who had very little support from her family. Yvette had a child at a very young age and her parents were extremely disappointed with the fact that she became pregnant and then dropped out of high school.

Once Yvette enrolled in VFI, she was able to convince her mother to “baby sit” her child, while she attended classes. There were times throughout the training that Yvette struggled. She would lose motivation, and clearly needed to get back on focus. Yvette’s Career Manager worked with Yvette closely, and slowly but surely, Yvette began to make headway and address the personal issues that were hindering her success.

Yvette took the GED and passed with one of the highest scores on record for VFI--3080. Today, she’s employed at Dr. Wendy Goodman’s private practice as an Administrative Aide earning \$9.00 per hour.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006

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(Above \$500,000)

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

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(\$100,000 to \$499,999)

Clark Foundation
Pinkerton Foundation
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Pacesetters

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THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Vocational Foundation, Inc. is grateful to all of our supporters. We rely on your kind generosity. Thanks to your donations, we have been able to provide vocational training and job placement to over 170,000 disadvantaged young people since our founding in 1936.

NEW FUNDING

VFI successfully closed the projected FY 2006 budget deficit thanks to our existing supporters and new grants from **HSBC in the Community (USA) Foundation Inc.**, **Washington Mutual**, the **Independence Community Foundation**, the **Pinkerton Foundation**, the **Ira W. DeCamp Foundation**, the **Booth Ferris Foundation** and the **van Ameringen Foundation Inc.** The following funders increased grant sizes: the **Bernard F. and Alva B. Gimbel Foundation** and the **New York Mercantile Exchange**. The **Edna McConnell Clark Foundation** increased the third payment of a multi-year grant.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS, continued

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The Way to Work

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