



## **BNY Mellon CityACCESS & Boston Children's Museum**

### **HISTORY, FUNDING & PROGRAM FOCUS**

*BNY Mellon CityACCESS: An Investment In Youth*, funded through the generosity of the Arthur F. Blanchard Trust, was created to positively influence the future of Boston's young people. The grant program provides enriching out-of-school opportunities through a special partnership with eight community-based organizations: Boston Nature Center, Boston Children's Museum, Malden YMCA, Mass VOTE, South Boston Neighborhood House and The City School. Offering access to both job and life skill opportunities, Mellon CityACCESS sponsors 36 inner-city young people (known as Teen Ambassadors), empowering them to discover their potential through unique work apprenticeships. In addition, five teens who best demonstrate a commitment to their work and future are awarded a \$5,000 scholarship for higher education upon completing the program.

Boston Children's Museum has partnered with BNY Mellon CityACCESS since 1996. Since then, our program focus has been on making connections with the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic communities of Greater Boston. We employ six teens between the ages of 14 and 18 who represent the linguistic diversity within the city and who, because of cultural differences, may not have previously considered employment at an institution like The Children's Museum.

#### **Program Goals:**

- To provide teens with the skills needed to succeed in the work world through training and mentoring
- To support teens' academic achievement by linking their schoolwork to their workplace experiences
- To develop teen leadership skills by training them to be liaisons to linguistic minority communities
- To improve new immigrant populations' familiarity with BCM's resources through teen-led outreach

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

#### **The Teen Ambassadors:**

- Work as paid, part-time staff (10-15 hours per week)
- Deliver internal, educational programs at the Museum
- Facilitate activities at external, community-based and citywide events, acting as the Museum outreach team
- Collaborate with Museum staff to develop new programs targeted towards their communities
- Help plan and host "City Celebrations" at the Museum (one for each linguistically diverse community represented by a teen), featuring the work of artists and performers from their communities

The Museum and BNY Mellon CityACCESS support the Teen Ambassadors by providing:

- A full-time staff advisor and mentor
- Weekly individual meetings with each Teen Ambassador as well as weekly group meetings

- Training in the basics of museum education, leadership, community organizing, public speaking, group facilitation, and research
- Workshops, in collaboration with other area youth organizations, designed to meet the Teen Ambassadors' developmental, social and emotional needs and strengthen community networks
- Exposure and access to Boston's major cultural institutions
- Academic support and college preparation services

## WHY DOES IT WORK?

Employing high school youth can be rewarding and challenging. For many of the Teen Ambassadors, work at Boston Children's Museum may be their first employment experience. Key elements in the success of the BNYMellon CityACCESS program at Boston Children's Museum have been:

1. **The practice of holding both individual meetings with each Teen Ambassador and weekly group meetings.** The individual meetings allow staff/mentors to support the teens in pursuing their specific areas of interest. Weekly group meetings foster a sense of community within the group and allow for discussion about a range of issues, such as discrimination against young people, race and gender issues, educational equity, violence in schools, economics, global issues, etc. These two components, individual and group meetings, while time consuming, are necessary components of a successful effort to help teens achieve their full potential.
2. **Connecting Teen Ambassadors with the larger Museum community.** Current Teen Ambassadors have strong relationships with Museum staff at all levels, from the President and numerous Vice Presidents to many program staff with whom they interact on a day-to-day basis. Introducing and helping teens to know staff at all levels is critical to their understanding of the institution as a whole, their capacity to participate as fully as possible in the work of the Museum, and the enhancement of their self-confidence as they gain a deeper understanding of their contribution to the Museum.
3. **Direct service to children and families in community-based settings, such as fairs and festivals.** The primary age of children attending such events is 4-8. The teens get a tremendous amount of respect and admiration from young children at these events. The teens take on a different status as they lead children through an art or craft activity and take great pride in this aspect of the program. They are particularly excited to be connecting with young children, often within the context of their own communities.
4. **Small size & wide scope of the program.** We employ six Teen Ambassadors during each school year, with the option of summer employment. In order to develop the most sustainable relationship with these young people, we often hire them as sophomores, and they stay at the Museum until they complete high school. Because we commit to working with small numbers of teens for extended periods of time, we have seen just 20 teens through the program over the course of twelve years. However, all Teen Ambassadors graduated high school and have either completed or are currently enrolled in college. Half of them still work at the Museum seasonally or on college breaks, and continue to serve as important bridges between their peer groups, their cultural and linguistic communities and the Museum.

## QUESTIONS?

Please contact Community Programs & Partnerships at 617-426-6500 with questions about BNYMellon CityACCESS or any of Boston Children's Museum's other outreach programs. The Teen Ambassadors are also available to talk about the program; please contact Jamell Hankins if you have questions for them.

**Jamell Hankins**, Community Programs & Partnerships Educator  
Teen Ambassador Mentor  
tel: x217 e-mail: [hankins@bostonkids.org](mailto:hankins@bostonkids.org)

**Megan Dickerson**, Community Programs & Partnerships Manager  
tel. x311 e-mail: [dickerson@bostonkids.org](mailto:dickerson@bostonkids.org)

**2008 – 2009 Teen Ambassadors**

Sheila Lee (Chinese and some Arabic), Rey DeJesus (Spanish), Benilde Carvalho (Cape Verdean Creole), Jonathan Celestin (Haitian Creole), Jeanny Mejia (Spanish) and Herman Li (Taishan/Cantonese)  
[teenambassadors@bostonkids.org](mailto:teenambassadors@bostonkids.org)