
AUDREY MILLER PORITZKY

EDUCATION FUND FOR CHILDREN

Volume 2, Issue 1

November 2006

Board of Directors

Laurence H. Miller, M.D.
President

David F. Poritzky
Vice President

Anne K. Miller
Vice President

Robert E. Miller
Treasurer

Theresa L. Sweeney
Secretary

Philip Coltoff

Judith K. Dimon

Leniece K. Flowers

Marciene S. Mattleman

C. Warren "Pete" Moses

Wendy Flores
Student Advisor

Donnell Cunningham
Student Advisor

President's Message

By Laurence H. Miller, M.D.

Dear Fellow Contributor,

It is a pleasure to share with you some of the exciting and creative activities in which our Fund has been involved during the past several months. We continue to expand and fine-tune our approaches to our two-pronged goals of individual student mentoring and education system reform.

Mentoring

In our October, 2005 newsletter, we made mention of a college application mentoring workshop which we were planning. The idea, brought to the attention of our Board by our Student Advisor, Wendy Flores, centered around adult volunteers working on a one-to-one basis with high school juniors and seniors on the college application process. Wendy chronicled the plight of the majority of students in New York City High Schools where there were far too few guidance counselors available to assist in the college application process.

On two Monday evenings in January of this year, twenty volunteers each, most of them Audrey's friends, work colleagues and family members, arrived at the Hope Leadership Academy to participate in the workshops.

In the first hour, the volunteers received training from Children's Aid Society (CAS) staff on current application procedures, financial aid processes and general college information.

For the next three hours, each volunteer was paired with a student to help address each one's individual needs and questions. The excitement in the workshop was electric as discussions deepened and relationships were forged.

After each workshop, the volunteers briefed CAS staff about their progress, as well as issues on which staff should continue working. Since most of those students graduated from high school recently and their future plans are still being formed, we are beginning to collect data on the outcomes of our workshop. This was further discussed at our Annual Board Meeting, which was held on August 28th in New York City.

One of our Board Members, Marcience Mattleman, Ed.D., a renowned educator and developer of innovative mentorship programs, has agreed to join Dave and the CAS senior staff on the leadership team of this important undertaking.

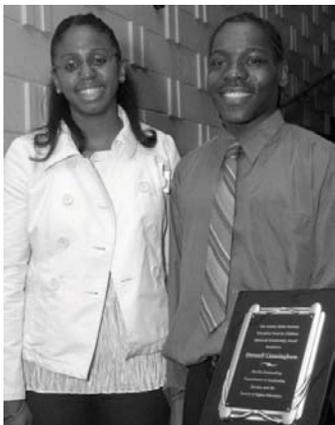
System Reform

On April 21, 2006, we held our Second Annual "Youth Speak Out on Education" conference, a partnership of our AMP Fund and CAS.

This year's theme "Are New York City High Schools Preparing Youth for College?" brought together 100 high school students who presented their ideas in video/power-point presentations and skits to city leaders and educators. Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott once more was our keynote speaker. Mr. Bill Chong, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services, also brought greetings. The vignettes, well thought out and orchestrated by the students, were powerful and poignant. They depicted the inadequacies of the guidance system in the New York City Public Schools.

Our Fund also presented its second annual memorial scholarship award in Audrey's name to a student who best demonstrated her qualities of education, leadership and service. We reviewed fourteen applications (double the amount from last year) and awarded the scholarship to Donnell Cunningham, President of the Keystone Club at CAS' East Harlem Center and a member of the Hope Leadership Academy. His award-winning essay is reprinted with his permission in this newsletter. Donnell will now also join our Board as a Student Advisor to serve alongside Wendy Flores.

We believe that these annual conferences provide an excellent forum for dialogue between the students and city leaders that will lead to system reform.



TWO WINNERS: AMP Education Fund Scholarship winner Donnell Cunningham joins last year's winner Wendy Flores at our annual conference in April.

Continued on page 2



The Mayor Speaks (and Listens): New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg made a surprise appearance at the AMP Education Fund's "Student Speak Out" follow-up session at City Hall in May.

**AMP Fund Website Launch:
We are now online!**

**Please visit us at:
www.ampeducationfund.org**

**Online donations will soon be possible.
Comments/suggestions welcome!**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Continued from page 1

Before the first annual conference, in April 2005, continuation of funding for CAS' Out of School Time programs was uncertain as it was a competitive bid. Due in part to the impact of the student vignettes, the Commissioner from the Department of Youth and Community Development renewed the funding totaling several million dollars, which ensured the continuation of the majority of CAS' after school programs.

As a result of our first conference in April, 2005, Deputy Mayor Walcott invited forty of the students to visit him and meet with City Education Commissioners to discuss their concerns. From this meeting, the Department of Safety invited two of the students to serve on its Board.

Deputy Mayor Walcott once again invited students from this year's conference to join him at City Hall. Mayor Bloomberg attended part of this meeting and questioned the students regarding why so few of them had applied for college scholarships provided by the city. The students responded that they were unaware of these scholarships. Mayor Bloomberg informed them that brochures had been printed listing all the city money that was available for their use in pursuing college educations. It became evident that these brochures had never been distributed to the students. With this, the Mayor made a call to the Superintendent of Schools to make sure that these brochures were made available immediately to all New York City high school students.

Thus, as you can see, the conferences allow New York City Youth a voice in their education by raising awareness and promoting discussions between students and city officials. We at the AMP Fund are delighted to be a part of the process. I know that Audrey would be proud of our efforts.

I want to conclude by thanking all of you for your continued support and belief in our Fund's work and for helping to keep Audrey's spirit and vision alive.

Following up with....Wendy Flores

Wendy Flores, the winner of the 2005 inaugural AMP Education Fund scholarship, has become a valued member of the Fund's board, helping in particular with our College Application mentoring workshops. We asked Wendy to provide our contributors with an update on her scholastic career:



Wendy catches up with AMP Board member Anne Miller at the Spring conference

"...College has been an amazing experience. My school year began ahead of time, as I began to train with my basketball coach during the summer. To my surprise, I made the team in late October. It was an amazing and warm welcome into college.

Academically, I was astonished at the volume of work that we were expected to complete and know. To my luck, the pre-med department was able to help me by offering guidance, support and tutoring. Unfortunately, it was not enough. A lot more effort was required from me, and basketball was just too much to handle.

I found a balance during the second semester. Instead of playing basketball, I began to work for Children's Aid Society's Mentoring Services. This part-time job allowed me to have enough time to excel in school. By the end of the second semester, I realized just how much the effort I had put in had paid off. I also realized how much effort I had to put into my education, and just how much it's worth.

During my summer break, I will continue to work for Children's Aid Society's Mentoring Services. I am also a seasonal employee at Victoria's Secret. In between, I will try my hardest to relax and spend time with my family; and prepare for yet another semester of hard work."

-- (July 2006)

The 2006 Honoree: Donnell Cunningham

For the second straight year, the AMP Education Fund for Children awarded a partial college scholarship to a New York City college-bound high school senior. This year's winner was selected from a pool of applicants based on the criteria of Leadership, Scholarship and Community Service, and we are pleased to attach his application letter below. In addition to a cash award, Donnell will also be joining us a member of the Board of the Fund. We look forward to working with him.

I have been a part of The Children's Aid Society-East Harlem Center Boys & Girls Club since I was 13 years old; I was referred by a social worker from the Mount Sinai Adolescence Clinic and was being seen at the Mental Health Clinic in East Harlem Center. My behavior wasn't amusing at the time; I feel it was because of my father's death and dealing with all the changes. Moreover, being a member of East Harlem Center has given me the opportunity to grow and develop strong leadership skills. I will be a great candidate for the Audrey Miller Scholarship because of my participation and interests in the organization. I am a motivated and driven individual who excels in leading my peers. I have a very strong work ethic and maturity and I am a good self-starter, while remaining humble and very open to learning from my peer and adult role models. Giving back to the community is something I feel strongly about; we all have obligations and responsibilities to give back to our communities.

Recently I was hospitalized on January 31st, 2006 and was discharged on February 16th, 2006 for a kidney complication, pneumonia and a tumor that grew in my large intestine and had to be surgically removed. This had been an additional challenge I had to work to overcome while continuing on my personal and developmental goals. While I was struggling to finish high school, I had my son, Daeshaun, at 16 and he became my first priority in life; which limited my options greatly. I quit school and I stopped coming to extra-curricular activities for a year and a half. Because I'm secretive when it comes to my personal issues I didn't really talk to anyone about what I was feeling and going through in my life at that time. I was absent from East Harlem Center for several months. The East Harlem staff contacted me and insisted that I go back in school. They offered me a position working in the after school program. Aside from my medical challenges and teenage fatherhood, my mother suffers from a mental illness known as Bipolar Disease. My mother did not always do things a mother should do such as supporting me academically, helping me with my social skills, and learning effective communication. This is the reason my oldest sister Shameek and I are so close. She did these things with me in full support. And now we both support and guide our younger sister Kim.

Over the years I have learned many life skills, including time management, effective communication, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills. I also learned to enhance my behavior management skills and how to talk to people in such a manner that allows me to elevate to their level of understanding. I developed most of these skills while participating in programs such as Keystone Leadership Club, Teen Tech, Corporate Workplace/Work Readiness, Hope Leadership Academy and the EXCEL program, just to name a few. As a result of my ability to lead youth I was elected president of the East Harlem Dare to Dream Keystone Club for the past two years.

I also increased my leadership qualities in several ways. I try to lead by example by planning teen center activities and events such as the East Harlem Children's Sleepover, African American month celebration and East Harlem Centers upcoming education and career day. I take initiative to help involve new peers in the center, guiding them with ease through the various programs offered, schooling them on the procedures and introducing them to other youth and staff members.

My future goals are to become a Social Worker and to work for a social services organization dealing with at-risk youth, mostly minority and those in low-income settings. I was planning to attend Buffalo State College but because of my physical illness I had to re-evaluate my options. I've had a Change of heart ever since my hospitalization. I now



Donnell Cunningham poses for a picture with members of the AMP Fund Board and Wendy Flores, the 2005 scholarship winner.

plan to attend Lehman College and study social work and matriculate into Hunter College School of Social Work for my MSW.

As I look back, I realize that I would not be where I am today if it was not for the Children's Aid Society East Harlem Staff. I've also been blessed with the support from a person I admire and appreciate most in this world, my older sister Shameek. My family has been through a lot over the years from my father passing away to my kidney complications to my mother being diagnosed with a mental illness, to becoming a teenage father and over coming life threatening medical challenges. My sister has been there for me since day one. From registering me in school, to buying my clothes and feeding my family, she is always here for all of us. I really admire her most because she finished High school and she will graduate from Monroe College this May with her Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. My sister has done this all by herself; unlike me she didn't have an older sibling to help her.

In conclusion to the challenges that face most teenagers I had to overcome medical problems, becoming a teenage father & a mother who is mentally ill while maintaining focus on my dreams as well as my responsibilities. I have the ability and courage of being a Children's Aid Society representative, not because of my personal life situations but because of my leadership abilities and willingness to be open to supervision and guidance while remaining a humble and mature individual and pursuing my goals and higher education.

Our Honoree: Donnell in the New York Times

On November 7, Donnell Cunningham was featured in the *New York Times*, as the centerpiece of an article on the Neediest Cases Fund. In describing Donnell's long, difficult journey in life, the article noted the following:

"...It was not until a friend introduced him (Donnell) to after-school programs offered by the Children's Aid Society...that he was able to understand himself better . . . This past year, Donnell was nominated by his school for the \$10,000 Toyota scholarship and was flown to Louisville, Kentucky, for the awards ceremony, and he won the Children's Aid Society Audrey Miller Poritzky Youth of the Year Scholarship."

We are pleased to report that Donnell is currently attending the Borough of Manhattan Community College and was recently hired for a \$25,000-a-year job. He moved into an apartment in the Bronx with his son, Daeshaun.

Introducing our Newest Board Member: Leniece Flowers

It is with great pleasure that we highlight our newest AMP Board Member, Ms. Leniece Flowers, who joined our Board in early 2006.

In late 2005, while reading *The Vermont Quarterly*, the alumni magazine of the University of Vermont (UVM), an article entitled *From Bronx to Burlington* caught my attention. The author discussed UVM's interest in attracting more minority students to enroll and that a pilot program had been developed with Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx.

The article highlighted several of the students who had matriculated at UVM and who were now graduating. One of them, Leniece Flowers, spoke about her goal to reform the education system of New York City.

I immediately contacted the editor of the magazine, told him about Audrey and our AMP Fund and he communicated to Leniece my interest in exploring with her the potential for her joining our Board. Below are excerpts from the articulate and poignant e-mail I received from Leniece.

"As a first-generation college student attending the University of Vermont, I never forgot my high school experience. At Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx, New York I experienced an environment of over-crowdedness, scarce resources, low academic expectations, poor teacher quality and high attrition rate. There was only one college advisor yet two sergeants from the U.S. military actively recruiting students for service. The message I received in high school was clear: we'll prepare you for war, but not for college.

My high school experience was testimony of the type of education inequity that exists in the U.S. Of the estimated 700 students that should have graduated from Christopher Columbus High School in

2001, I was one of 297 that did. I was also 1 of 14 to attend the University of Vermont through a college partnership. My vision is to turn the New York City Public School system upside down and inside out! I want to hold the United States accountable for the successes and failures of ALL its students.

I was taught from early on that you must 'lift as you climb'. Throughout my years in college, I have returned to Christopher Columbus High School several times to encourage students to pursue higher education. This September, I will directly influence and mold the lives of twenty children who will refer to me as Ms. Flowers—their kindergarten teacher. I have returned to the Bronx and have dedicated the next two years of my life to Teach For America, a non-profit organization whose mission strives to close the education achievement gap. I firmly believe that education disparity is the civil right issue of our generation."

Since joining our Board, Leniece has actively participated in last year's College Mentoring Workshop where she quickly and enthusiastically engaged several mentees. She attended our annual Board Meeting in August and she has volunteered to participate in this year's College Mentoring Workshop.

Whereas Wendy Flores and Donnell Cunningham, our AMP scholarship award winners, represent bright and dedicated young people who have graduated from high school and who are now pursuing college educations while also serving their communities, Leniece Flowers represents the next level of the cycle, a college graduate now gainfully employed in her chosen field, attending graduate school and giving back to her community. She is truly a role model demonstrating that courage, perseverance and the will to succeed are key ingredients in realizing one's education dreams!

Welcome aboard, Leniece.

Book Available for Purchase: *Dear Sophie*

Dear Sophie is a compilation of stories written by friends and family to Sophie about her mother. Many of you have contributed to this insightful book written in the hopes of giving Sophie a picture of her mother, encompassing all stages of Audrey's life.

We are offering "*Dear Sophie*" for purchase in advance of publication. A donation of \$250 to the Audrey Miller Poritzky Education Fund (50% of which is tax deductible) will reserve a book for you. The book is hard bound and contains 150 pages of stories and photographs.

We are making this book available because so many of you have expressed the desire to have a personal copy. "*Dear Sophie*" is poignant, funny and inspirational and it is a tribute to a beautiful young woman taken from all of us at a much too young age. Send check made out to The Audrey Miller Poritzky Education Fund for Children, P.O.Box 688, Summit, NJ 07902-0688. Please indicate where book should be sent. Deadline for ordering is January 31, 2007.



The Audrey Miller Poritzky Education Fund for Children
P.O. Box 688

Summit, NJ 07902-0688

www.ampeducationfund.org

Dedicated to helping children realize their academic potentials and pursue their education dreams

The Audrey Miller Poritzky Education Fund for Children is tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization registered in 2004.

All contributions are 100% tax-deductible.