Spotlight: Leah, 2019 PLACE Mentor

Leah was excited to join The Bronx is Blooming to gain leadership skills and team building experience as a PLACE mentor. She is a rising sophomore at Lehman College where she plans to major in Math and Computer Science and minor in Spanish. Before joining the program, she had volunteered with The Bronx is Blooming multiple times. As a volunteer, she was inspired by the message of The Bronx is Blooming.

So, when Leah found out about the PLACE mentor program at her campus’ Office of Community Engagement, she jumped at the chance to get involved.

"I see the great need for passionate advocates who will fight for the change our environment deserves. The Bronx is Blooming has helped me become one."

Throughout her time with The Bronx is Blooming, Leah gained a new perspective on her local environment and Bronx parks. “After this summer, I have started to see nature in a whole new way.” Despite having had previous experience with small gardens and planting, she was able to learn so much more about horticulture and the importance of park maintenance.

"The energy at The Bronx is Blooming is amazing. You can tell everyone genuinely cares about the environment and the work they do. It’s really inspiring."

“I see the trees that need to be mulched and the plants that need to be watered. I see all of the maintenance our parks need but don’t get because of a lack of funding. But most of all, I see the great need for passionate advocates who will fight for the change our environment deserves. The Bronx is Blooming has helped me become one.”
PLACE Student Spotlights

We asked some of the PLACE high school and college students who worked in Claremont Park with their PLACE Mentor Leah to tell us about their experience and how it affected them.

Carmelita, Claremont Park

Carmelita decided to join The Bronx is Blooming after finishing up her senior year at Bronx Center for Sciences and Mathematics. Initially, she joined PLACE to get unique summer work experience. However, as a PLACE student, she has been able to learn so much about both herself and her local environment through a new way of engaging with her local community. “Through PLACE, I was able to do things I did not think I could before.” As a leader of volunteers, she has been able to push herself out of her comfort zone. “Leading groups was a learning experience. Although I’ve never necessarily done it before, it taught me a lot about myself.”

She was most affected by the impact that she could have on her neighborhood. “I learned a lot here. Most importantly, I realized that you have to care for your community to live in the kind of community that you want.” Her favorite part of the program was working with her PLACE mentor, Leah. Leah’s attentiveness and care in her role as a mentor has greatly contributed to her PLACE experience. “Leah’s an amazing mentor. She’s so knowledgeable and cares a lot. If she ever sees that we’re struggling, she helps us. And if anyone is having a bad day, she always makes work fun.”

Jaden, Claremont Park

Jaden, who attends Westchester Square Academy, found that the PLACE program enabled him to become a hard worker and gain a new appreciation for his local parks. “Even though the job was hard at first, it became so much more important to me when I realized how crucial our work was to the community. Every part of my job with The Bronx is Blooming and its mission is so important.”

He has found that leading groups of volunteers has been the most enjoyable part of his experience with The Bronx is Blooming. “I love leading groups. Leading volunteers came naturally to me. I think it was fun because I was also learning about myself while I guided them.” Just like Carmelita, Jaden has been profoundly impacted by his mentor, Leah. “Leah was a very great mentor. She had a great energy and made everyday fun. She was part of the reason I was so excited to come back.”