The Bronx is... Blooming

What is the PLACE Program?

The Program for Leaders Advancing their Community’s Environment (PLACE) is a youth leadership program that has provided more than 240 Bronx high school and college students with seasonal jobs. At PLACE, we provide students with a learning experience that enables them to become leaders and advocates in their community.

Spotlight: Jonattan, 2019 PLACE Mentor

Born in the Dominican Republic and raised in the Bronx, Jonattan is a rising junior at Lehman College where he is studying Therapeutic Recreation and Japanese. He plans to find a job in restorative agriculture and is working with The Bronx is Blooming for outdoor, hands-on community service experience in his neighborhood.

"Helping [the PLACE students] understand the reasons behind the work that they do has made a big impact on them"

This summer, Jonattan was a PLACE mentor and led a group of Bronx high school and college students in Crotona Park. He grew up near Crotona and saw this summer as an opportunity to make real change in his community. Throughout his role as a PLACE mentor with The Bronx is Blooming, he gained valuable insight into park maintenance and horticulture: "I never realized how much attention and care Bronx parks need. They are underfunded and understaffed. But, through The Bronx is Blooming, the parks get the attention they deserve." To Jonattan, his role as a PLACE mentor has been the most rewarding part of the program. Throughout PLACE, he and his students have become better leaders. He has been able to simultaneously influence and be influenced by his students.

"Through the Bronx is Blooming, the parks are getting the attention they deserve"

"I've appreciated getting my students involved in the process of caring for parks. Helping them understand the reasons behind the work that they do has made a really big impact on them".
PLACE Student Spotlights

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

Mishii, Crotona Park

Mishii is a Bronx native who chose to work at The Bronx is Blooming to gain experience that she hopes will help her to prepare for a degree in biology. Mishii will be attending Boston University this fall on the Pre-Med track. She is a strong testament to the mission of the PLACE program. Working in Crotona, she has been given a totally new perspective on Bronx parks and environmental stewardship. “I look at Bronx parks totally differently now. Originally, I thought that this job would be picking up trash everyday. But getting to weed out invasive species and steward trees, I get to know the reasons behind what I’m doing. This knowledge makes me care a lot about the work I get to do everyday.” She loves working with her group and PLACE mentor Jonattan. “We have a lot of fun together, but we also work hard everyday.” Looking forward, Mishii is excited to enter college with both valuable work experience but also new horticultural knowledge for studying biology this year.

Quran, Crotona Park

Quran is a rising high school Junior at Cinema School in the Bronx. He came to The Bronx is Blooming through a recommendation from his cousin, a PLACE alum. Before PLACE, he had little experience with gardening and horticulture. Over the course of the program and his training with his PLACE mentor, Jonattan, he was able to gain a lot of knowledge from The Bronx is Blooming. “When I came to The Bronx is Blooming, I didn’t really know a lot about taking care of parks. But because of my mentor [Jonattan], I’ve learned a lot. I come to parks now and know how things need to be taken care of. I know the names of plants, trees, and weeds, and what they need.” PLACE has also shown him the dedication of the volunteers who come to The Bronx is Blooming. “It’s really rewarding when the volunteers are motivated. Our first group project was really fun because everyone wanted to be there and wanted to work hard.”

Stay Connected

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