What is the PLACE Program?

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 : Emily, 2019 PLACE Mentor

Emily is a rising junior at Fordham University where she is pursuing a Digital Technology and Emerging Media major with minors in Journalism and Urban Studies. Born and raised in Northern Virginia, Emily chose to come to New York for college and fell in love with the neighborhood and culture around her campus. Although she’s not a Bronx native, she chose to be a PLACE mentor to make a difference within her newfound community in the Bronx.

"Through PLACE, community members see us in the parks everyday and they’re able to see that someone is taking care of them.”

According to Emily, she and her group had an amazing time together during the program. "PLACE has been an incredible experience... I’ve been able to see them open up and form friendships. It’s amazing because we’re kind of like a little family."

Her experience with PLACE and The Bronx is Blooming has enabled her to find different ways to influence change within the Bronx. “My time at The Bronx is Blooming has continued to inspire me to give back to the community. This is my first time doing any type of environmental community service, so it's been amazing to give back to the community in another way.”

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During the PLACE program, Emily and her group spent every day at St. Mary’s Park. She firmly believes that her group’s work has made a big impact on the people who live near the park.
PLACE Student Spotlights

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

Jarrell, St. Mary's Park

Jarrell is a rising high school Junior who joined this summer’s PLACE program armed with both an extensive knowledge of horticulture and a love for his local environment. Last summer, he volunteered at the New York Botanical Gardens as a counselor for a summer camp. This summer however, he wanted to enact a more direct change within the Bronx's natural environment through the PLACE program. He enjoyed his PLACE experience because he was able to make a visible change within St. Mary’s. “My group and I tackled any task that we were given. I love how much work we get done and how much of a change we were able to make.” He found that his experience with his group, mentor Emily, and Bronx is Blooming volunteers made the program more meaningful and impactful. "My summer with the PLACE program and The Bronx is Blooming has been such a positive thing to me. Being around people that want to be working hard motivates me to work even harder."

Michael, St. Mary's Park

Michael was profoundly inspired by The Bronx is Blooming’s message and the work that he completed throughout the PLACE program. This summer, he returned home to the Bronx after finishing his freshman year of college at Georgia State University where he studies Film and English. At Georgia State, he found himself extremely involved in outdoor activities. But at home, he became bored of staying inside all day. He joined The Bronx is Blooming to get out of the house and do something good for his community. He is hopeful that his work on the park's greenspace and the massive construction that is set to improve the park’s facilities will allow more children to go to Bronx parks more often. “When I was a kid, I would avoid coming to Bronx parks. Me and my friends would go to parks in Manhattan or Brooklyn instead. But seeing the construction around the parks and the impact that my group is making in the parks, I hope that the next generation of Bronx kids can enjoy Bronx greenspace.”