



# Here & Now

A Newsletter from Leake & Watts

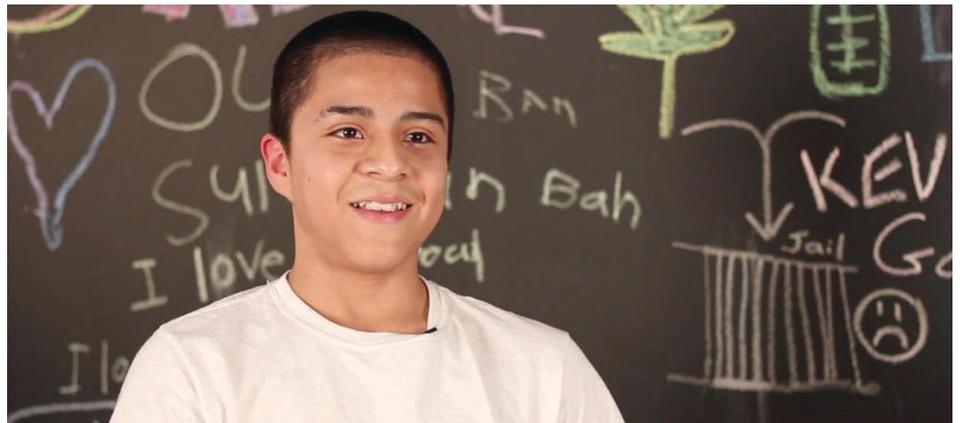
SUPPORT TODAY. SUCCESS TOMORROW.

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## Keeping Teens Close to Home



“I shouldn’t have taken the gun,” says thirteen-year-old Kevin. “I should have just left it or dumped it and kept going on with my life. The choice that screwed me up was taking the gun, and that got me here. The cops searched my crib and found the gun. When they cuffed me and put me in the back of the police car, I felt horrible, like I was a dog.”



Although Kevin is still a young teenager, he was facing serious charges once the police found a gun in his possession that he had picked up off the streets. “At first I thought I was going to get fifteen or twenty [years] with the gun charge,” says Kevin. “Now I know that I could have even gotten charged with attempted murder, and then things would have been so much different. I wouldn’t have been put in the Leake & Watts program – I would have been put in jail. I wouldn’t have had people supporting me, helping me realize things about myself. Once I had done my time, I would have gone back to the streets and started selling dope. And that would get me back in jail again, or killed.”

Just two short years ago, thirteen-year-old Kevin would have been sent upstate to a facility to fulfill his sentence, far away from home and his family. But today, under New York State’s *Close to Home* initiative, Kevin has the opportunity to participate in the Leake & Watts Manida Non-Secure Placement (NSP) Program, which uses group counseling and other methods of relational rehabilitation, particularly emphasizing the vital role of peer support and family relationships. Based on research which shows that juvenile delinquents and offenders are more successful when they are able to build supportive relationships, *Close to Home* is designed to keep young people closer and better connected to their families and their communities.

# LEAKE & WATTS

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## Executive Director's Message

Dear Friends,

This fall, Leake & Watts was honored as the **Gold Winner** of the **2014 New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Awards**. This award recognizes outstanding management practices of nonprofits in New York City, Westchester County and on Long Island. Some of the criteria used to select award winners include leadership practices, organizational transparency, financial accountability, fundraising practices and strategies for growth. Over the past several years, our agency has transformed many of our management practices, enabling us to deliver more effective, higher quality services, and we have nearly doubled in size and scope in just the past four years.

The Nonprofit Excellence Award belongs to the entire Leake & Watts community. Our agency would not be able to successfully support over 8,000 children, adults and families each day if it weren't for the extraordinary dedication and work of our more than 1,200 staff and hundreds of volunteers, donors and community partners. It is truly inspiring to see such a large group of people working together to support vulnerable children, adults and families across the greater New York City metro area. While each person featured in this newsletter has achieved success due to their own efforts, the support of our entire community is critical in helping them to achieve their goals. As you will read, Kevin, Brandon, Nikki and Christian are moving out into the world as stronger, more successful young adults. I want to extend my thanks once again to you, as someone who contributes to their accomplishments through your support of Leake & Watts.

Our work in supporting our neighbors is vital. I am pleased that we will be continuing to expand our services in 2015, as we open our new Family Resource Center in the Bronx, launch a Respite Care Program and open three Limited Secure Placement programs for youth involved with the juvenile justice system in the coming months. As we celebrate the holidays this year, I thank you for being a part of our generous, open-hearted and dedicated community.



Happy Holidays,

Alan Mucatel

GOLD WINNER  
FOR THE NEW  
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EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS

THE NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY TRUST

NONPROFIT  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS

WINNER

# Leake & Watts Gala Attracts Record Support



The crowded ballroom at The Pierre Hotel was humming with excitement as guests witnessed an outpouring of support for Leake & Watts on October 30th. Our generous friends and supporters made the 2014 Annual Awards Gala the organization's most successful to date, raising \$550,000. Leake & Watts honored David Pope, President & CEO of the Generoso Pope Foundation, who has done significant philanthropic work in Westchester County. Addressing the audience, Mr. Pope explained that Leake & Watts has grown very dear to his heart and that he is continually impressed by the dedication of our leaders, staff and community to provide support to vulnerable children, adults and families. Then, for the third year running, legendary Hockey Hall of Fame New York Ranger Rod Gilbert and WABC-TV Senior Meteorologist Bill Evans bantered back and forth during an animated live auction, bringing in over \$113,000 to support children, adults and families.

A highlight of the evening was when 17-year-old Nikki Bartolomeo stepped onto the stage and captured everyone's attention. Standing tall under the stage lights and speaking clearly, Nikki announced, "Before I came to Leake & Watts, I struggled with depression and I was in and out of psychiatric hospitals. I didn't have confidence in myself. But as a student at the Biondi School and a resident at the Residential Treatment Center, I received a lot of support from so many of the staff. Now I'm doing really well. I am excited about my future and I know that I can do anything." As Nikki sang the song "Without You" from the musical *Rent*, the audience was able to see that she has truly become comfortable sharing her talents, a testament to the progress that she has made overall.

Another highlight of the evening was hearing from teen mother Yoselin Huyan, who is enrolled in the Leake & Watts Parent-Child Home Program, along with her two-year-old son Jayden. The audience was excited to hear about the progress that her son has made while in the program, and burst into applause when she mentioned having recently achieved her GED.

"Listening to Nikki perform and having Yoselin tell us about how she is working to provide Jayden with a good education and a better life were moving experiences for all of us," says Leake & Watts Executive Director Alan Mucatel. "We were reminded again of why we are all involved in this work, supporting young people and families as they try to get back on their feet and achieve their goals for a better life. We are grateful that so many of our generous friends have continued to provide support for our work at the gala and throughout the year."



Top photo: Leake & Watts' 2014 Annual Awards Gala honoree David Pope (right) with Assistant Executive Director and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Donald Antonecchia. Bottom photo: Nikki Bartolomeo, student at the Leake & Watts Biondi School, performs at the 2014 Annual Awards Gala.

## Tribute Gifts

If you would like to commemorate a special occasion or honor someone who has passed, we invite you to make an "In Honor of" or "In Memory of" gift. Your donation will support Leake & Watts programs while you pay tribute to someone who is important to you. Whomever you designate will receive a thoughtful card from us, letting them know that a gift has been made in their name. To do so, contact us at **914.375.8605** or [development@leakeandwatts.org](mailto:development@leakeandwatts.org) or visit us at [www.leakeandwatts.org/make-a-donation](http://www.leakeandwatts.org/make-a-donation).

### IN HONOR OF GIFTS

For: Rachael Genicoff  
By: Joanie Hecht

For: Alan Mucatel  
By: Muriel Hyman

For: Carol Chen  
By: Alison McGuigan

For: The Empire City  
Motorcycle Club  
By: Alan Mucatel

For: Agnes Hassell  
By: Timothy &  
Judy Murphy

For: Elinor Ratner  
By: David Ratner

For: The Youth of the Passage  
of Hope Program  
By: Carmen Reyes

For: Oliver Reyes-Vicente  
By: Rodolfo Reyes-Vicente

For: Belinda Conway  
By: Barbra Waldfogel,  
Zoe Berg and the Sydney Berg  
Charitable Fund

### IN MEMORY OF GIFTS

For: Gerald Curry  
By: Kathleen Curry

For: Andrew Gilenson  
By: Robin Gilenson

For: Corey Foster  
By: Donald Jenkins

For: Harold Daniel Drummond  
By: Alan Mucatel

For: Gordon Stanton  
By: Alan Mucatel

For: Sharon Paye  
By: Linda Rosenthal

## The Power of Positive Role Models

*“I’ve really struggled with my relationships with some adults,” explains Christian, a fifteen-year-old from the Leake & Watts Residential Treatment Center. “But it’s important to me to have somebody to give me support, because none of us can just do everything by ourselves. Being involved with the Mentoring Program gives you somebody who wants to talk and who wants to help you get better. You need to have that person who is going to tell you right from wrong and help you make better decisions. I’ve never really had that before,” he explains.*

Christian has been successfully paired with his mentor Betsy for just over a year. Betsy volunteers 6 to 8 hours a month to provide support for Christian. In the program, Mentor/mentee pairs meet together once a month and join the entire group of Mentoring Program participants for a monthly group activity. They connect on the phone or by email during the weeks they don’t see each other.

“The majority of the kids at our Residential Treatment Center really want more one-on-one time with a caring adult, so their relationship with their mentor has a very powerful impact,” explains Leake & Watts Manager of Volunteer Services Jack Toone, who coordinates the Mentoring Program. “The reality is that most of our youth have come from underserved low-income communities, and have dealt with abuse, neglect or trauma. Having a mentor provides our residents with the stability that they badly need. This isn’t a new idea, but it really works. The kids always have a phone number that they can call so that they can talk to someone. That extra support makes all the difference.”

Betsy and Christian have built their relationship over time. Betsy has made it a priority to be a sounding board and a guide to Christian. “When you’re a teenager, you really need someone to listen to you without judgment, without repercussions,” Betsy explains. “Christian is a great kid. He just needs someone to hear him out.



*Christian, a resident at our Residential Treatment Center and a participant in our Mentoring Program, with Jack Toone, Leake & Watts’ Manager of Volunteer Services and the Coordinator of the Mentoring Program.*

I try to provide an avenue for him where he feels that he can talk to me about anything. We talk about how he can deal with his emotions when things don’t turn out the way that he would like.”

When talking with Christian, it’s easy to see that he deeply admires Betsy. He explains that, “It’s great because when I talk to Betsy, I step away from everything else. She’s an amazing person who has helped me out a lot. It makes me feel stronger when I know that there’s somebody who cares enough to want to help me change.”

It’s also clear that Christian’s participation in the Mentoring Program has had a positive impact on his relationships with others. With a quiet smile, he says, “Some of the things that Betsy has told me, I’ve actually put into play. When I’m in a situation and I think of her, I think about how I should follow what she has said, and I try to find different ways to deal with people instead of lashing out, using profanity or getting physical.”

At its Residential Treatment Center, Leake & Watts is providing mentors to a group of teenagers that have difficult emotional and behavioral challenges, and who aren’t supported by traditional mentoring programs. With a group of dedicated volunteers, the program has had

great results. “The biggest reason that I love mentoring programs is because I’ve seen that six months or a year of support from a mentor can have a transformative impact on kids’ lives. They like school more, they’re thinking about their future and their career goals. I’m so excited that Leake & Watts decided to add a Mentoring Program in addition to the therapy and other support programs that we have, because our mentors reinforce everything that the teens are learning,” says Jack Toone.

When talking to Christian and Betsy, you can see that Jack’s excitement is well-founded. Christian’s relationship with Betsy has clearly made a significant impact on his life. “I tell other kids to get involved because even though the Leake & Watts staff and teachers support us, there’s something different about talking to your mentor. It’s really helpful to talk to Betsy because I don’t see her every day, so I get the chance to explain the situations in my life on my own terms. Betsy didn’t know me at first, but she didn’t ask me about my problems. She just let me talk and helped me to think about other things instead of focusing on negatives. My relationship with her has helped me to focus on more positive things in general and now I know what it is like to live my life with that more positive perspective.”

# Fall at Leake & Watts





Manida NSP is a “non-secure” residential program for youth under 16 who have committed a lesser offense and do not require the more restrictive setting of a secure facility. While in the program, youth receive a wide range of support services, including education, recreation, counseling, medical and mental health services. One of the primary benefits of these youth being sent to a city-funded program is that families are able to see their children more easily and often, which encourages closer relationships between the youth and their parents, siblings, extended family and home communities.

“I’m the man of the house, so I should be at home,” explains Brandon, another participant in the program, who is also thirteen years old. “I have a little sister, and my mom needs me too. I shouldn’t have screwed up because they need me there every day. But I’m here instead. I feel really uncomfortable because I’m not at home doing what I’m supposed to be doing, and that’s being a big brother and helping my mom with anything that she needs.” Brandon is grateful that *Close to Home* has enabled him to join the Manida NSP Program, especially because after completing several phases of the program, he has earned the ability to visit his family on certain weekends. “I really want to make my mom proud, and she says that when I go home, she can see that I’m more mature. She can trust me more now. I’m not going to mess around anymore because my little sister looks up to me. She is confused when she sees me at home one day and then I’m not there the next day, but it’s good that I can at least come home sometimes.”

Kevin and Brandon are just two of the many court-involved youth who are placed in Leake & Watts’ Manida NSP residential program each year. Teens not only remain much closer to their families and local communities, but they also receive a great deal of support from staff and from the other young men in the program. All of the program participants live, go to school and attend group counseling sessions together. They also attend recreation activities, meals and other events as a group, with the idea that the young men can help each other learn how to make more positive choices. “The group setting has really helped me a lot,” says Brandon. “Being with the other guys has taught me that it’s not really about me. I had a selfish mentality and the



program broke me out of that because my choices affect everyone else.”

In order to promote peer support and and guide the group treatment, our NSP Program utilizes the treatment model The Missouri Approach. This approach emphasizes moving beyond a teen’s behaviors and finding the root causes of why he committed an offense in the first place. After doing so, teens can create long-lasting changes, preparing them to return and contribute positively to their school, home and community. To support the idea that they will eventually contribute to their home communities, the young men are promoted through “phases” as they advance through our program, and at each stage, they are given both more privileges and more responsibilities. The young men who have been in the program for a longer period of time are expected to be role models to the newer program participants, and to help resolve conflict amongst group members. By the time they complete the program, they have developed more positive communication and conflict resolution skills, greater decision-making skills, and healthy coping mechanisms that will support their desire to make more productive choices on a daily basis.

Both Kevin and Brandon agree that while they don’t always enjoy doing everything with the group, having peers and staff to support them has been very helpful. “I have an anger problem,” explains Kevin, “but I have a lot of people here that help me deal with that. The hardest thing about going back home will probably be for me to stay calm, to stay in control without having someone to talk me down. I don’t have anybody at home, but in the program, I always have somebody to talk to so that my anger won’t build up as easily. I’ve learned that anger is controllable and I can force myself to slow down and make better choices.”

All of the relational aspects of the Manida NSP Program fit right in with the original intent of *Close to Home*, which is to transform the state’s juvenile justice system. By providing juvenile delinquents and offenders with a more nurturing environment and helping them build positive connections to their community, *Close to Home* is designed to strengthen families and reduce recidivism rates.

Leake & Watts has been on the forefront of this movement to place juvenile offenders in less restrictive settings and help them build positive connections. “Just like with Kevin and Brandon, we’ve seen a lot of other youth connect with the staff and reconnect with their families and communities while they’re in the program,” says Lisa Crook, Leake & Watts Director of Juvenile Justice Programs. “They’ve been learning more positive habits, developing positive decision making skills and trying new activities like creating music, writing poetry and playing basketball. These are all things that are going to help them make better choices and follow a more positive path.” Building on the success of the Manida NSP Program, Leake & Watts will open three Limited Secure Placement (LSP) Programs in 2015, also designed to provide the least restrictive service setting for youth during their sentence and help them transition back into the community. “NSP is about supporting youth so that they are able to succeed in ways that seemed impossible to them before. We’re giving them new opportunities to focus on school, learn better communication and set positive goals for themselves,” explains Ms. Crook. “Kevin and Brandon are wonderful, and we have a lot of other great young men in the program. They all deserve the opportunity to make something of themselves. Our soon to open LSP Program will provide the same opportunities for other young men and young women as well.”

## Living the Holiday Spirit



For the past four years, Catherine Forbes has enjoyed watching her colleagues from Ernst & Young argue over who will play Santa Claus when they pass out holiday gifts at the Leake & Watts Seabury Day Care Program, which supports children from low-income families. This year was no exception. “All of the guys fight to be Santa because Santa gets all the attention. All the children mob him when he’s handing out presents. Last year, the four-year-olds didn’t even wait that long! They rushed him when he first stepped into the room and tried to tackle him like they were a bunch of little linebackers!”

During the holiday season, one of the ways many of Leake & Watts’ supporters get involved is through our Annual Toy Drive. Catherine is one of many dedicated volunteers who participates each year. She is excited to see more and more of her colleagues becoming involved. “Everyone wants to join in somehow, because we can see the impact that it has on the kids. We have about 125 people who participate now, including several former employees who still want to be involved. Some people go out and buy the gifts, while others help wrap them and deliver them to the kids at Seabury.”

Throughout the year, Leake & Watts supports over 3,000 children and teens, many from low-income families who struggle to provide holiday gifts for their children. With the help of over 30 corporations and dozens of individual volunteers and donors, we collect and distribute toys and games to thousands of children and teens in need.

*“We met one little four-year-old girl who opened her gift and told us that she was happy to get a present from us because it meant that her mom wouldn’t have to worry about trying to buy her something. It was an eye-opening experience.”*

Just like many of our other Toy Drive donors, Ernst & Young employees enjoy being involved because it connects them with the local community. “Bringing gifts to the kids lets us reach out in a very hands-on way and see how even a small thing like a present can have a big impact on a child,” explains Catherine. “We met one little four-year-old girl who opened her gift and told us that she was happy to get a present from us because it meant that her mom wouldn’t have to worry about trying to buy her something. It was an eye-opening experience. There was another little boy who wouldn’t put his gift down the whole time we were there. You can tell how special these gifts are to the kids. They are treasured items. These kids don’t have a lot that they can really call their own and they’re happy with whatever they get. There is just pure, unmitigated joy. They’re such good kids and it’s such an amazing thing to be a part of their holiday.”

Each year, thanks to the generous contributions of many individuals and the help of over 30 corporations and civic organizations, Leake & Watts distributes over 3,500 toys and gift cards to the children, teens and young adults in our various programs. ***Donations to all our programs, including gift cards for teens and young adults for our Toy Drive, are accepted throughout the holiday season and into the New Year. If you would like to donate, please contact the Leake & Watts Development Office at [development@leakeandwatts.org](mailto:development@leakeandwatts.org) or 914.375.8605.***





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## NBA Cares Visits Leake & Watts



Students at the Leake & Watts Biondi School were excited to have a visit from the NBA Cares Team as part of the NBA All-Star Fit Assist Campaign. Led by NBA Hall of Famer and former Detroit Pistons player Bob Lanier, several members of NBA Cares led a basketball clinic for over 75 of our 7th and 8th grade students in October. A Basketball Skills Clinician ran a variety of drills that helped our students improve their free throws, layups, passing, dribbling and defensive skills. The teens also enjoyed hearing Bob Lanier share what helped him achieve success. He emphasized not only commitment to goals and hard work, but also the need to surround oneself with good role models and hard-working friends that will be positive influences. He also spoke to the teens about the importance of reading and encouraged them to continue working hard in school.

*“Bob’s story really had an impact on the kids,” says Jack Toone, Leake & Watts Manager of Volunteer Services, who organized the event. “Afterward, they all wanted to shake his hand and say thank you. One young woman told us that Bob had helped her understand what she needed to do to keep moving forward in her life.”*

As part of the NBA’s efforts to positively impact children and families, Leake & Watts is one of a variety of community organizations that will be visited by the NBA Cares Team in New York City over the next several months, leading up to the NBA All-Star Game, which will take place in February at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York.

*NBA Hall of Famer Bob Lanier with a Leake & Watts staff member and student.*

