

## JCCGCI Expands Students' "Horizons" Participants Write About Their Experiences

In 2006, the Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island (JCCGCI) created the Horizons Academy through funding from the NYC Department of Youth & Community Development. Since then, the program has been providing 11th and 12th grade students at Abraham Lincoln High School with career training and educational opportunities that they would never otherwise have access to. With the program celebrating a new group of graduates this June, several participants recount the successes they've enjoyed through the program.

### **Bismah Shaukat, 12th Grade**

From my perspective, Horizons Academy is the backbone of Abraham Lincoln High School. It is a key part of what makes Lincoln's sense of school spirit. As a participant, I believe that it is a ladder that enables students to reach success. This is done through a variety of extracurricular activities, which makes students more active in social and community work.

It keeps reminding every student that, other than the basic requirements of high school education, we have a responsibility to participate in community activities. Additionally, this program prepares students for the SAT or ACT and provides a variety of job opportunities for those who need to work.

To me, Horizons Academy is a major part of my education. I got help for my SAT as well as a job for the summer. The program also gave me many opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. For example, I participated in making projects for the Empowerment Program, which focuses on building communication skills. Specifically, I am actively working to help coordinate

Empowerment Day, a community event that encourages students to communicate through various mediums of art, on May 12 at Abraham Lincoln High School. I also received college counseling. In order to choose a college, I took advantage of the free Internet access available at the Horizons Tech Lab in our school at any time. The staff, including Ms. Maliki, Ms. Nicole, Ms. Noreen, Ms. Margaret, and Ms. Rivera, have truly been a great help to me.

Horizons Academy not only helps me but other students as well. It provides them many different types of help depending on what they need. For example, one of my friends needed help for the SAT, which she got and she improved her score. Horizons recently hosted an SAT Cram Session that was open to the entire community. Therefore, I believe that Horizons Academy is a key to success. Without it, I and many of my peers would not have access to programs that allow us to make an impact on our community and that improves our academic skills.

### **Sonia Isaac, 12th Grade**

Horizons Academy has been a huge help in my life. The jobs that they offer have prepared me for the real world. I was able to do something that I love through Horizons Academy. I taught children at a daycare center and got hands-on teaching experience. Horizons Academy is also a great place to go and ask questions of educated adults. Teachers have a lot on their plate and it's necessary to schedule appointments to talk about issues. With Horizons Academy, the adults here are always available to answer all your questions and offer you help. It is a great supplement to our school's structure. The Horizons Tech Lab at

our high school is another great contribution because it's right downstairs, which makes it easily accessible.

### **Infra Walayat, 12th Grade**

A major part of my senior and junior years have been spent involved in Horizon's Academy. Horizons Academy is a great program that has lots to offer. The program has held many celebrations and events that bring the seniors and juniors together as a family. The teachers involved are all very understanding, helpful, and talented, and display great team work, and every event that was organized was successful and fully enjoyed by the students. Horizons Academy also offers jobs to all the students it services. I got my first job, at Coney Island Hospital, this way. I want to become a doctor, so it was nice to experience the environment in the hospital. Most of the time, I'm a clerk assisting with tours of the hospital and sometimes I help Payroll with filing. It's very interesting and the people I work with are very friendly. This job was wonderful and I experienced something that is similar to what I dream of becoming in the future.

Horizons Academy also offers after-school tutoring. This was extremely helpful when I was preparing for my SAT. Horizons Academy created a Tech Lab at Abraham Lincoln High School that has many resources that allows students to expand their knowledge. Ever since I joined this program, I feel as if I've become part of a family. I'm remarkably grateful that Horizons Academy is a part of my school and I am glad I joined during my last two years of high school. I encourage others to do the same. Horizons Academy helped me a lot and due to their efforts, many of the juniors and seniors came together.