



*The Mentoring Resource Pool*

# NEWS ... NEWS... NEWS

## Urban Synergy's First Think Further Seminar Gets Thumbs Up!

A fantastic and ongoing response to Urban Synergy's first University Academic Seminar at Prendergast School. If you missed the event on 18th September, you missed a hugely inspiring evening, hosted by Oxford University under-graduate, Michael Isola with Urban Synergy.

A packed hall of over 150 young people plus parents, supporters and mentors heard a panel of fired up young undergraduates from several top universities (Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College, Warwick etc) inspire the audience towards academic success. Several speakers dispelled the myths that university is unattainable or isn't for young black people. They shared their own experiences of their journey to get to university, how they were getting on and their future aspirations. Sam Bowen, the Gifted and Talented Coordinator at Prendergast said: "... It was a great success and I'm sure some of our students have taken on board the motivational message (I did get asked for a stack of newspapers [from the girls] to read this morning!)."

The success of the seminar has also not gone un-noticed within the hallowed halls of Westminster. Diane Abbott MP has taken an interest in what was achieved at Think Further and we hope to keep Urban Synergy on her radar.



Michael O. O. Isola



Yinka Rickford-Anguin



Anne-Marie Imafidon



Victoria Olaronke Babalola



Ola Masha



Andre Hackett



# Dates for your Diary...

**Friday 5th December 2008,  
7.30pm – Annual General Meeting  
and Seasonal Celebration**

**Reuters, Canary Wharf, London**

All mentors and Urban Synergy supporters are invited to the AGM for news of the year's highlights and achievement of goals. You'll also hear what's planned for 2009. After the AGM, we will be celebrating and recognising the successes of our mentees with awards so please do come along and support the event.



## Auction Helps Fund Vital Urban Synergy Project

With unprecedented attendance at the first Urban Synergy Professionals Auction, the evening was judged to be a roaring success, thanks to all who came out to support the event. Urban Synergy raised £3700 from bids during the night and our sincere thanks goes to all those who spent their money on supporting us. The money is being used primarily to fund ongoing projects and new experiences for our mentees and a full rundown of how it has been allocated will be given at the AGM in December.

PS: The auction featured a huge variety of successful bids on 15th June 2008. However, due to circumstances beyond Urban Synergy's control, the supplier is unable to fulfill the Monaco experience they generously offered for auction on the night. No funds between any parties have been exchanged and we have sent the winners our sincerest apologies and a token of thanks for their continued support. The supplier is working with the bid winners to provide an acceptable alternative prize.





## Mentees Learn Teamwork with London Fire Brigade

The London Fire Brigade has won much praise for its 'LIFE' programme. 'LIFE' teaches young people between the ages of 13 and 17 firefighting skills and the concept of self-discipline and team work alongside real firefighters.

On 28th October, during the Half Term holiday, Urban Synergy mentees and mentors attended Lee Green Fire Station and participated in a number of training exercises designed to help them gain greater self-confidence and team building skills.



Urban Synergy Cohort Leader and Mentee Training Coordinator, Alison says: "We're really pleased that the London Fire Brigade (LFB) has accepted Urban Synergy mentees for this type of training. We're still a relatively young organization but we're making great strides with the young people we work with and I think this has been recognised by the LFB. The mentees will learn the importance of balancing teamwork with self-reliance, which will help them in numerous life situations. They'll also be put in situations, which will allow them to practice their problem solving skills. We are sure the mentees understood and appreciated the invaluable and often life-threatening work that members of our Fire Service do every day to help others.

## Mentees visit Playvybz Internet Radio Station

Breaking into radio, television and media environments is notoriously tough to do but in August, four Urban Synergy mentees, aged 15+ were privileged to experience the cut and thrust of radio for themselves.

A visit to internet radio station, Playvybz to learn the ropes of broadcasting allowed them to get inside information on the entertainment business as well as to understand the ins and outs of putting a radio programme together. The young people enjoyed the event immensely, each of them expressed that the day has made them more determined to work in the media. Thanks to Sandra at Playvybz for hosting Urban Synergy mentees.



# In Brief: Who's Saying What About US...?

## Deptford Green School 'Top Tips for Success' Seminar

SCHOOLBOYS determined to defy negative stereotypes organised an event with US to help inspire them and their peers to achieve their dreams.

They were supported by the school's head of English Jackie Bygrave and mentoring organisation Urban Synergy. Ms Bygrave said: "The boys were inspired by a visit to a slavery exhibition in Liverpool.

"When we were coming back they said to me that they never see any successful black people, it's all guns and crime. "But I said, 'Of course there are', and this has really helped bring that home.

*"We now plan to embed the Top Tips Seminar this in the curriculum and do it every year."*

Thank you for your performance at Deptford green school, my children have truly been inspired and motivated by your good work. Crystal (parent)

## Urban Synergy Auction

"Just wanted to say what a great night. I knew little about Urban Synergy before I arrived, but by the end of the night the conclusion I came to was that it's more than just a volunteer and mentoring service – Urban Synergy is a wonderful community. Every one I spoke to was polite and extremely nice, and the whole atmosphere was warm and friendly. It was well organised and the all performers were energetic, talented and very entertaining. I'm pleased that our contribution raised some good money for the cause. And well done for taking Urban Synergy to where it is now. It's been an impressive journey."

*"Thank you for inviting me to the US Charity Event on Sunday.*

*Although I did not have a winning bid, I had such a great time. I was bidding for the cause, as opposed to the actual items, so took pleasure in bumping up the bid prices for the sake of it, which then forced the bidders who really wanted the items, to keep increasing their bids to compete against me! So more money for Urban Synergy!"*

"A lot of people are talking about the current situation with our young people, but very few are actually sacrificing and making maximum impact. You guys have already stood out as an organisation that is going to make a difference."



*"Before I forget I just want to send a warm thank you to you and the Urban Synergy team who organised yesterday's event. It really was a wonderful evening, and I really enjoyed myself."*

An absolute fantastic evening – great entertainment and won the bid for the photograph shoot for my daughter who was over the moon with excitement!! US is the way forward for a lot of our children whose parents' voices they cannot hear!!

Excellent work is being achieved by US, its members and the children are so so inspired by their presence.

**Tracy Ford**

# Deptford Green Boys Get Taste of the Boardroom

Deptford Green London Challenge Boys, visited Millwall FC to meet with Heather Rabbats CBE, their Executive Chairwoman. Thanks Heather and her staff, in particular Jason for showing us around and making it such an interesting, informative, enjoyable and inspirational trip!

## Mentor in the Spotlight...

Raki Gillen, an OMV Oil Trader is an Urban Synergy volunteer who for the last 5 months has been a mentor to a 15 year old student. Getting to know her mentee has been relatively easy but the mentee/mentor relationship hasn't been without its bumps. Raki was able to organise a two-week work placement for her mentee, in August. But as she tells Urban Synergy, her efforts to help her mentee secure the placement didn't stop there.

My mentee has been shadowing a number of lawyers at the Goldsmith chambers which she has thoroughly enjoyed. We had a few hairy moments involving London Transport but after a million trial runs of her journey prior to her start date, a few early morning pick ups from me and one day of yelling we got there and I am proud to say, her second week went by without a hitch. She even worked out alternative routes on her own when things went wrong.

I am so very proud of my mentee. At the end of last term she partook in some end of years examinations, mock exams as well as the real thing for Religious Education, which counts towards 50% of her final GCSE grade. We were also given her predicted grades for her GCSE's and both her mother and I were distraught by the Ds, Es and Fs predicted.

However after a good talking to, she buckled down to revise for her exams and she got an A in RE.... As you can imagine both her mum and I are very proud of her and we hope this will set the tone for her exams next year. It's certainly given her something to work towards and she knows we are all rooting for her.

From all at Urban Synergy, big congratulations and 'thank you' to Raki for being a constant support to her mentee over the last few months.

## Mentee Feedback on Difficult Situation Workshop

Nine young people attended a workshop led by Paul Lawrence at Reuters, courtesy of Urban Synergy in August. The workshop was a direct response to the fact that many young people are not equipped to deal with difficult situations in their day-to-day lives, whether in communicating with their peers or with authority figures. The workshop was designed to help them review their behavioural responses in different circumstances through role play and to give them the tools to appropriately react and communicate effectively in adverse situations. Urban Synergy would like to thank Paul Lawrence for putting on a stimulating and interesting workshop, which certainly got the young people talking.

So, did they think it was worthwhile? **Kateri**, age 16 says: "I learnt a lot including a few behind the scenes tricks on how to handle my parents and difficult situations."

Another participant said: "Learning about body language, tone, volume, word and speed will really help me. I'm glad I came along."

But perhaps the next comment sums up the sentiment by the entire group on just how enjoyable and effective the workshop was for them. **Rushain**, 16 said: "Make it a bit longer next time." So he definitely enjoyed it then! Don't worry, Rushain... Urban Synergy is listening and the Difficult Situation Workshop will be rolled out in a slightly longer format very soon!



# Going Once, Going Twice...

Responses from those that successfully bid in the first US Fundraising Auction are coming in thick and fast! Here, Deborah Perkins, the winning bidder of a prize with Chef Dwayne Mingo-Chester gives us a taster of her prize.



Imagine 'Come Dine With Me' meets haute cuisine. This was a black tie evening with sheer class, style and originality.

Six 'suitably attired' diners were honoured to experience a four course, culinary delight developed by Chef Dwayne Mingo-Chester. The table was laid beautifully to compliment the meal and conversations were warm and entertaining. An element of heroism – and laughter – was also experienced when a napkin caught fire!



Each and every dish of this gastronomic experience, from the canapés through to the last

morsel of the chocolate and orange sticky toffee pudding, served with orange compote and a vanilla sabayon, were all exquisitely executed. Each mouthful gave testament to the passion of the chef to his craft; his total appreciation for what appeals to and truly excites our tastebuds.

Dwayne constructed a menu that catered for both the vegetarian and meat eaters amongst us. Options included a beautifully presented trio of stuffed vegetables with lentil dhal and coriander bread and for the carnivores among us, a perfectly cooked breast of guinea fowl filled with wild mushroom. The pièce de résistance was without doubt, a gazpacho soup with lush berries served between the starter and main course. A pungent taste of black pepper at the bottom of the glass provided that final kick that truly cleansed the palate.

Truly a 'Come Dine with Me' evening to remember:

One bid for auction that was hotly contested between many of the female guests on the night was a 'package' of entertainment and services offered by O'Neil Howell. The lucky bidder (and boy, is she the envy of a whole lot of women) was Assunta Jean-Pierre. Assunta's prize included new experiences accompanied by O'Neil such as horse riding, bowling, dinner and flying a plane!

Assunta's thank you note to O'Neil said it all:

"Thank you....bowling was fun (and I swear it was my first time).....  
....the horseriding was worrying..... and painful for days after.....  
....the dinner venue was fantastic and the food surprisingly tasty (!)....."

I have just been pronounced a 'nut' by my sister after I told her I flew a plane yesterday and had a call from a friend who found the thought of me up there worrying (several of them in fact)..... I however found it very exciting and I would certainly do it again....

However none of it would have been as much fun without your excellent company so thank you especially for your time and for your bravery in being 'auctioned'....

And O'Neil said.. "Wait until the next Urban Synergy auction I'm going to put on a package that is so great for US!"

## Special Thank You to all who have supported US this year, some of which we've listed below:-

Thomson Reuters Datatrax Ltd Blondell Productions Flash Photography Eddie Nestor Darae Palmer Tameka Empson Eddie Kadi Breis Chenoa Jahaziel  
Lorraine Murray Commander Rod Jarman Tracey Ford New Life Assembly Church Charles & Co Printing Garden Court Chambers Took's Chambers  
Goldsmith Chambers Circle One Housing Association Harmony Productions The AMA Consultancy Rolling Sounds Media Company The Lane Restaurant  
Life Skills Training Consultancy Heather Rabbats – Millwall Football Club Playvbyz Internet Radio Lee Fire Station The Powerlist  
Young Mayor of Lewisham Councillor Heidi Alexander Number One Health Group 1 Harley Street  
All Fundraiser Participants