About Byron T. & Ruth D. Miller

A warm, friendly smile – that was Byron’s signature. He had a special gift of reaching out to all, regardless of age, and thereby touching their lives in memorable ways. Byron was the husband of Ruth Dobrin Miller, a communications consultant and former director of communications and public affairs for (Loral) Fairchild Systems (now BAE Systems). Ruth is also an active volunteer at United Way of Long Island.

Byron was manager of special marketing projects for North and Central America at Lufthansa German Airlines. His untimely and sudden passing took place on November 21, 1987 while playing tennis during a Lufthansa Tennis Tournament, which he conducted annually for the company’s Tennis Sport Club. He served as captain of the Lufthansa Tennis Team of LI Industrial League and as chairman of Lufthansa Tennis Sport Club.

Byron’s love for life, compassion for people and dedication to his work demonstrated the human spirit at its finest. His belief in young people was evident on the ball field, on the tennis court, at family gatherings and community functions. His interest in young people provides a meaningful basis for United Way of Long Island’s Byron T. and Ruth D. Miller Scholarship Fund.

This year’s YouthBuild Long Island graduation provided an opportunity for YouthBuild alumnus Joshua to offer words of inspiration to the graduating class. Having come from a difficult background, he shared his story of how the program offered him the opportunity to improve his future, explaining “YouthBuild actually gave my life direction and a path to follow.”

Joshua grew up in the foster care system with his twin and older brothers, and was eventually adopted into an already large family. Despite growing up in an ever-growing violent neighborhood, his optimism was a catalyst to succeed.

Upon entering YouthBuild, he was unsure of the next steps to take and needed direction. The program gave this young man the structure, individualized support, as well as the career and leadership training needed to provide him with clarity on deciding his next steps. Joshua went on to attend and graduate from St. Thomas Aquinas College, in Rockland County, NY, with his Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration.

Today, Joshua has a full-time position with Hyatt Hotel as a Guest Service Agent and he credits YouthBuild for this entry-point into his hospitality career. He is enjoying his new employment and is looking forward to advancing within the company. His favorite part about the industry is that he has “the potential to brighten someone’s day by having a positive outlook, and that is incredibly rewarding.”

In May 2019 Joshua received his Bachelor’s Degree. He is the first person in his family to graduate college. Joshua then visited and had dinner with Ruth Miller to tell her the good news.
YouthBuild Update

In 2019, 19 young men and women graduated from YouthBuild Long Island. During the year-long program, students participated in an array of curricular and professional development activities including tutoring, mental toughness, financial literacy workshops, trauma-informed mindfulness and meditation, workplace tours and listened to guest speakers from companies, organizations and government entities.

Congratulations to:

- David Alfaro
- Maria Ayala
- Stephanie Ayala
- Izell Brock
- Jyliek Brock
- Zanquasia Brooks
- Yaquasia Cowans
- Darius Gentle
- Lakasha Halstead
- Tyshaney Llewelyn
- Luis Moreira
- Yakimma Murphy
- Olivia Nohs
- Natalia Osorio
- Tahjaray Tillman
- Naomi Vazquez
- Joseph Wade
- Jacob Watkins
- Clayton Jones

Mental Toughness

YouthBuild Long Island expanded into the Brentwood, Central Islip and Village of Hempstead communities and, over the course of two years, will serve more than 120 young adults.

This fall, programming began with Mental Toughness, a week-long educational training that places these young adults through a transformational process to reshape their futures. Each student enters the program with a different story, but all hope for success in a career of their choice.

United Way of Long Island’s YouthBuild Class of 2020 endured long days completing drill training, team-building activities, self-reflection and problem-solving exercises led by Respect For Life Educational Services.

Communication is often key, as students soon came to realize during one team-building event called “The Rope” in which 60 students were challenged to remain holding hands while they go over a rope without touching it. As one student stated, “We were not well organized during the rope challenge because no one was listening to one another...the rope isn’t the obstacle, we’re the obstacle. We need to learn to communicate better to solve a problem.”

Jenette Adams, United Way of Long Island YouthBuild Director said, “Mental toughness is such an important and crucial part of the program. The bond that is created with the students is like no other. Each student comes in as an individual and leaves a part of something so much bigger.”

YouthBuild students will spend the next ten months continuing to break down the walls that they’ve put up and build brighter futures.

Byron T. & Ruth D. Miller Scholarship Fund

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