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.

Student Updates

Michael Maza

Michael was motivated and determined to get an education when he came to this country but he struggled with learning the English language. He enrolled in YouthBuild to help him learn English and prepare for his TASC test (Test Assessing Secondary Completion) in order to obtain his High School Equivalency Diploma. Very soon after enrolling, Michael knew he made the right choice. The staff at YouthBuild worked with him and encouraged him to move forward and to never give up. They gave him the tools to succeed, including math, science, social studies, and career development classes. He also credits the YouthBuild staff with getting him involved in the local community, volunteering to help to build houses and plant trees. He believes doing things for the community will help make the world a better place for everyone.

While in YouthBuild, he was also able to achieve his TASC High School Equivalency Diploma, OSHA certification, Building Trades Union Apprenticeship Readiness certification and completed the English as a Second Language Program at Suffolk Community College.

Due to his success in YouthBuild, Michael was granted a scholarship by United Way of Long Island’s Byron T. & Ruth D. Miller Scholarship Fund to attend Suffolk Community College in the Fall 2017. His love of books and learning are sure to take him to great places in the future after he graduates from college.

Danee Yasmin Johnson

Danee is a graduate of the YouthBuild Long Island 2017 Summer Program in Bellport and a recipient of the Byron T. & Ruth D. Miller Scholarship. Danee came to the YouthBuild program with an overwhelming desire to further her education and help not only her family but her community. Danee’s childhood was not easy. Her mother was arrested when Danee was 11 years old and she was placed in foster care. When she was reunited with her mother at the age of 14 her mom worked hard to provide a good life for her but it was still difficult.

During her time in the YouthBuild Long Island program Danee successfully completed all the program requirements and participated in many volunteer activities. She said, “I learned the greatest reward is staying focused and making good decisions. I can now say I’m strong, wise, and confident.”

Thanks to the scholarship, Danee is now attending Farmingdale State University and plans to go on to medical school to become a Physician’s Assistant. She believes working in this field is her way of giving back to the community and helping people in need. She said “I’ve had a lot of life experiences and though I am young, I know how desperately help is needed.”
Class of 2017-2018: Mental Toughness

YouthBuild Long Island, a program of United Way of Long Island, is a youth and community development program, addressing core issues facing low-income communities: housing, education, employment, crime prevention, and leadership development. At YouthBuild, low-income young men and women ages 18 - 24, work towards their TASC diploma while learning hands-on job skills and attending vocational training programs.

The YouthBuild LI class of 2017/2018 is off to a great start. The students completed a mental toughness program where they learn to “Rethink Possibilities”.

The “Mental Toughness” program is a week-long educational training program that removes students from their home environments and places them in military-like training to reshape their futures. Each student enters the program with a different story, but all hope for a similar result -- to build their character and help them think more about their future and career paths.

Spending a week at Camp De Wolfe in October, United Way of Long Island’s YouthBuild Class of 2017/18 endured long nights completing self-reflective homework and early wake-up calls to take on drill training, team-building activities, and problem-solving exercises. As the week progressed, students realized that the removal of outside interruptions helped to drown out all distractions and concentrate on what needs to be done.

Communication is often key, as the students came to realize during one team-building event called the Rope Challenge. For this challenge the students needed to get over a rope line held three feet off the ground without touching the rope while all holding hands. The activity required the students to work together and solve the problem of how to accomplish the task.

Theresa A. Regnante, President and CEO of United Way of Long Island said, “YouthBuild’s Mental Toughness is critical to the success of each student as they continue through the YouthBuild program. It will help the students lay a foundation for their future successes.”

Now that the students have emerged from their tangles and completed Mental Toughness, they will take their fresh outlooks and new skills to the YouthBuild classroom where they will continue to build brighter futures.

Over the course of the program, students will work toward earning their TASC diplomas, build a house from the ground up and earn credentials in green construction, healthcare and other career field choices. Each career pathway offers opportunities for advancement for the employee, as well as a quality workforce for employers. Along their journey, the students will receive counseling and assistance with their job search and placement.

“On behalf of YouthBuild Long Island and the students it supports, I would like to thank you for your continued generosity and commitment to the young people of Long Island. Our youth are committed to making a transformation and utilizing the tools provided in YouthBuild to overcome obstacles. Because of you, overcoming those obstacles has become a bit easier. From the bottom of our hearts United Way of Long Island’s YouthBuild Long Island thanks you for your support. Your willingness to give and your efforts in changing the lives of others is greatly appreciated.”

A Thank you from Elizabeth Morgan, YouthBuild Long Island Director

YouthBuild Staff

Elizabeth Morgan, Director
Ronald Hughes, Leadership Developer & Counselor
Steve Muzyka, Director of Housing & Training Services, Vocational Instructor
Donald McCarthy, Career and Placement Coordinator
Christine A. Pastore, Admin Assistant/Office Manager
Heath Broughton, Intensive Case Manager
Walter Teauhey, AmeriCorp Vista, Career Development Coordinator
Brian Hinestroza, Teacher/Tutor
Nolan Reese, Teacher/Tutor

Newsletter edited by Ruth D. Miller, Trish Rivers and Elizabeth Morgan

Byron T. & Ruth D. Miller Scholarship Fund

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