





## Taking Care of Business

As the new NYU-MSW intern at Project Return, I have enjoyed seeing the inner workings of my first non-profit agency. I should probably tell you how I became a social work student. It's certainly not a discipline I ever thought I'd study. After making the "right" career choice to go into engineering, and then getting an MBA from Cornell a few years later, I ended up working in financial services. After having spent a decade working for Fortune 500 companies (and a hedge fund), this is my first work experience with a non-profit organization. Two months in, I have been exceedingly impressed with Project Return, as a business.

Many people assume that Non-Profit organizations lack business acumen and professionalism, instead preferring to focus on the "fuzzy bunny" aspects of the work (a description used frequently by one of my investment banker friends). However, Project Return seems to be impressively business savvy. With their successful annual birdhouse auction fundraiser, and positive organizational culture proven to retain caring and experienced staff for years, they have the basis necessary to run a successful organization.

Additionally, the dedication and caring demonstrated by the staff of Project Return personify the extraordinary mission of this organization. I have never seen another workplace where the cultural attitude is truly selflessly "all for one, one for all" (to borrow a phrase from some well known "Musketees"). What's more spectacular, perhaps, is that each current staff member seems to have given buy-in to this notion. The nurturing environment created through the open communication, dedication, and perseverance of the staff creates a strong organizational culture, forming the basis for fulfilling Project Return's mission.

Overall, I have enjoyed my (brief) time interning with Project Return, and have been extremely impressed with the business assets that allow it to wholly serve its mission.

Tai Pimputkar, Graduate Intern  
NY School of Social Work

## Alumnae Corner

We've been like proud parents this year as we've had a lot to celebrate. We enjoyed high school graduations from three schools as Catherine graduated from Greenwich H.S., Emily from Staples and Sam from Fairfield. Despite a very rainy day, we celebrated with a big graduation party at the house. It was such a joy to visit with the girls' families and friends. We had a wonderful sense of pride, combined with a little sadness because, for some of our girls, it would soon be time to move on.

Of course as the girls move on they become PR Alumnae. We are thrilled to welcome three girls to ranks of PR alumnae this year: Emily, who is now a Freshman at Pace University; Catherine, a freshman at Pratt and Laura, who was at PR for five years, completed a year of college in June and left this Fall to work full time and live independently.

Our celebrations continued with a dinner in honor of three

of our older alums for their accomplishments. Jessica graduated from Boston University, Heather became a certified EMT and Brittany obtained her GED. It was especially rewarding to see how proud they were of themselves. Goals aren't always achieved on schedule, but when our alums reach their goals, we love that they still want to share their achievements with us.

## Our Mentoring Program

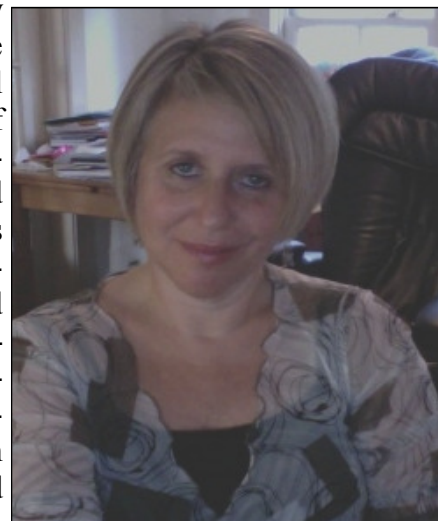
One of our graduates recently wrote: "It has been wonderful having Lisa as my mentor these past three years. The best thing about Lisa is that she is a person who really listens to me and is always there for me. I feel that I can really talk to her with out being judged. She has guided me through difficult and happy times and for that I am grateful. I feel a close connection to her and am glad that she has been there for me at times when I most needed an adult role model in my life."

Lisa Cantor, this graduate's mentor said recently: "When I was asked to participate in the Project Return mentoring program, I didn't know what to expect. As the mother of three teenage daughters, I felt comfortable with girls and hoped I could develop a friendship with my mentee. Three

years later, I feel such a sense of pride that my mentee has graduated the program and is living independently, working and attending college. The relationship we've developed is based on mutual respect and caring. I've been delighted to be a supportive adult

friend, available to listen and share both the challenges and joys of her life. The friendship has deepened over the past three years and I look forward to being a part of her life for many years to come."

"Often times a mentor may come to our program with a vision of wanting to rescue a girl or perhaps change her life in a significant way," says Leslie Emanuel, program coordinator. "Instead, we encourage mentors to focus on being present in the moment, to be an active listener and offer empathy and gentle support as needed. Part of the normalcy building for our girls is to provide them with healthy experiences outside of Project Return. The girls have come to look forward and really value the quality time that they spend with their mentors. We at Project Return have such high regard and respect for the relationships that the mentors have provided for the girls."



Leslie Emanuel, Coordinator  
Mentoring Program

### Holiday Wish List

Slipcovers, sheets for twin beds, a rice maker and gift cards from CVS, Marshalls, Barnes and Noble and Bobs Sports are the perfect gift ideas for this season.

## Thank You

We at Project Return, Executive Director Susie Basler, the girls, the staff, and the members of the board of directors thank our donors and sponsors, our dedicated volunteers, artists and businesses who have joined the Project Return family.