



**'Homeless
my first
year of
college'**

Robbie Martinez

"If I didn't have On Point, I wouldn't be in college," says the 20-year-old. "It's that simple."

Robbie Martinez grew up in the Bronx, moving to Syracuse when he was 15. When he was in 10th grade at Henninger, his dad dropped him out of high school.

"I asked him not to, but he did it anyway," Robbie said. "He said he needed me to babysit my siblings." Robbie's sister and brother were 7 and 5 at the time.

Robbie earned his GED, and applied to OCC, but the college wouldn't accept

him because he was a dependent of his father and his father wouldn't sign the application form. Then he heard about On Point from an acquaintance.

**'I want to help
kids grow up
the right way.'**

"I was going through a rough time," he recalled. "I was homeless because my dad had kicked me out. But I felt really comfortable talking to

Tricia (On Point Advisor Tricia Baker). She didn't ask personal questions. She was just trying to get me the help I needed."

See 'Robbie' on page 2

Volunteer with us!

On Point for College could not function without our amazing 160 volunteers and mentors who assist our staff and students.

We are so grateful for these incredible people who are such good friends to the organization.

But more volunteers and mentors are always needed, and we have many opportunities available:

- Driving students to and from college, including during breaks and holidays.
- Tutoring students.
- Becoming involved in one of our events, such as our Golf for Grads event or our Celebration Dinner.
- Hosting a "College Shower" at your church, civic group or place of business.
- Lend your expertise to On Point by offering legal help, dental work, eyeglasses or technology training to our students.

"Being an On Point mentor is so fulfilling and rewarding," said Mary Huntington. "I get to witness students grow up to contribute so much to society."

Or you tell us how you want to help. Maybe you can help in ways we haven't considered!

To find out how to get involved, call College Success Advisor Tricia Baker at (315) 382-8147.

Message from Ginny Donohue, founder

With 360 new students heading off to college this year, the offices of On Point for College have been busy – what an understatement!

We are so grateful to the staff for their endless patience, mentors for their constant support (driving, shopping and filling backpacks), and our friends in the community that arrive daily with school supplies and bedding.

Then there are those moments that remind me of how grateful our students are. We were shopping for school clothes two weeks ago and Mark was



in my group. He was heading to SUNY Delhi. The students were given \$130 to spend on their clothes. Mark turned to me and told me: “I am having a hard time spending \$130.” I answered:

“Mark, if you don’t need all of it, I can share it with someone who does.” “You don’t understand,” Mark replied, “in my whole life I have never had \$130 to spend on clothes at one time!”

Blessings to all who support these amazing students. My favorite quote is one from Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Peace,
Ginny

‘Robbie’...from page 1



Robbie and On Point Counselor Tricia Baker

Tricia and On Point staff helped Robbie declare his independence and he was accepted into OCC. But his life just seemed to become more difficult.

“I got hit by a car and broke my arm in October, and then the house I was staying at burned down in December,” he said. “I was homeless my whole first year of college.”

Finally things started to turn around. Robbie ended up at The Salvation Army’s Transitional Independent Living

Program at Barnabas House, which gives homeless youths a place to stay while they work toward independence. He was there for eight months, found a job, bought a car and rented an apartment. He’s been on his own ever since.

Now, Robbie’s in his fourth semester at OCC. He works 35 hours a week at Onondaga Case Management as a peer mentor. Balancing work, rent, his car payment and classes hasn’t been easy.

“There’s no room for slacking,” he said. “But my whole outlook on life is differ-

ent. I used to wonder why things always seemed harder for me. Now I know it happened so I could help other people.”

“My dream is to open my own youth development organization,” he said. “I

never had any emotional support at all growing up. I want to help kids to grow up the right way.”

‘I couldn’t have done it without On Point.’

Our students say thanks!

Nyandeng, Le Moyne: “Without On Point, this would not be possible.”

Deondre, SUNY Morrisville: “Thank you to all the mentors and staff who have helped me be successful.”

Stephanie, Hudson Valley Community College: “Thank you so much. When I am done with college, I promise to give back to the young people in my community.”

Clarissa, Herkimer Community College: “If it was not for this program, I would be very lost.”

Amlur, Hobart and William Smith College: “The help I am receiving at On Point is more than I could have imagined. This program is a blessing and your contributions keep it going strong.”

Teakira, Onondaga Community College: “I am a 20-year-old single mother who opted out of college until I heard about this program. I want you to know this really helps and pushes people like me to get an education.”

Always ‘Getting my family on my mind: Out of Poverty’

Brian’s dream: to start a youth football league



Brian Greene

When meeting Brian Greene, one thing is clear: This is one mature 20-year-old. When peers head to parties, he hits the gym – or the books.

“This is crunch time,” he says. “Time to take care of business.”

This August, Brian boarded a flight to Oklahoma Panhandle State University.

He arrives as a junior transfer student, on a full football scholarship, playing linebacker for the “Aggies.”

But the road getting there wasn’t easy.

Brian’s mother was in jail and his father struggled with addiction. He was raised by his grandmother until she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease. When he graduated high school, she went into

an assisted living facility – and he no longer had a place to stay.

Brian’s dad brought him to On Point’s Sam Rowser. On Point staff helped him apply to college, and supported him at every step. During the summer, On Point and Le Moyne College provided housing.

In high school, Brian’s football talent had drawn interest from Division I recruiters, but his grades weren’t good enough. So he was determined to work just as hard at his studies as he did on the football field during college. And he earned a 3.1 grade-point average at Erie Community College, graduating with an associate’s degree.

Brian’s dream is to start a youth football league for inner-city athletes in poverty.

“That’s why I don’t mind sharing my story,” he says. “Every time someone like me hears my story, I might be able to change a life the way mine was changed.”

‘I’m filled with gratitude for the people who have helped me.’

Throughout his college career, the hope of being able to give back to his family has driven him to succeed.

“Getting my family out of poverty is in every decision I make,” Brian says. “Every time someone is going to a party or getting into a car with someone who might have been drinking, that’s what I’m thinking about.”

See ‘Brian’ on page 4

College shopping, On Point style



Two students find time for quick words of wisdom from On Point Program Director Sam Rowser.

Each Tuesday during the summer, On Point staff drives students to Carousel Center to go college shopping.

After a morning college orientation session, in just a few hours, as many as 40 students buy the clothes they’ll need for the school year. After shopping, they’ll eat lunch and get a ride back home with an On Point staffer.

Each student who needs assistance gets a one-time spending allowance of \$130 for school clothes – not a lot, but it’s greatly appreciated. Along with a new backpack, bedding and supplies from On Point, it helps level the playing field for low-income students and symbolizes a new start in life.

An On Point counselor recalls a conversation with a student after buying the last of her clothes. “She looked at me on the escalator and said ‘Nobody ever gave me anything before – ever.’”

Grateful student shoppers: William Porch and Evelyn Chapman



On Point for Jobs success story Thaismary Morales

'Without On Point, I would have been lost.'

Thaismary Morales, a Bill Gates Millenium Scholar, graduated from SUNY Stonybrook in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in environmental health and safety. She was supported by On Point for College every step of the way, and worked hard on her studies.



But after graduation, Thaismary struggled to find a job in her field. She turned to On Point for Jobs for help. Coordinator Jim Schofield helped her tweak her resume and prepare for interviews. He also heard about an opening at the firm O'Brien & Gere. Thaismary aced the interview and got the job.

"If not for Jim, I never would have gotten an interview," she said.

Thaismary worked at O'Brien & Gere for two and a half years before taking a community liaison posi-

tion with the Atlantic States Legal Foundation. She is already working on furthering her education, taking classes in radiation therapy at Upstate Medical University.

Thaismary still manages to find time to volunteer several days each week at On Point, counseling young Hispanic high school students and encouraging them to follow their dreams of going to college.

"Even before I started volunteering with On Point, I was recruiting young people," Thaismary said. "The help On Point gave meant everything to me. My parents never went to college and they were limited in the advice and support they could give me.

"On Point gave me all my guidance during my college years, and every single ride to and from school came from On Point. Without them, I would have been lost."

A group of On Point mentors and students is pictured sorting college supplies for first-time students. In the first row, from left, are Huiza Hong, Margaret Doyle, Diane Mallore, Rachel Doyle, Linda Lowengard, Tami Gilbeaux and Mary Ann Laidlaw. In the back row are Jalen Snow and Jessica Everson.



'Brian'...from page 3



Brian is pictured with Bruce Grieshaber and Janice Grieshaber-Geddes.

Janice Grieshaber-Geddes and Bruce Grieshaber have generously chosen to distribute the Jenna Foundation for Non-violence Scholarship to an On Point for College student each year.

Brian will receive the \$1,000 scholarship his junior and senior years at college.

The scholarship will help him pay for his travel expenses, textbooks and other expenses not covered by his scholarship.



Thanks to the major and junior sponsors of our Golf for Grads tournament:

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Above left: Mike Linkiewicz sunk two out of three putts in the putt contest.

Above: A trio on the green.

Below: Tom Tormey and John Fatti aced the putt challenge.

Below left: On Point grad Majak Dut out for a spin.



Above: Golf for Grads founder and Committee Chair George Nazzaro is pictured on the course with his daughter Carrie.

On August 25, golfers, business leaders and friends of On Point for College gathered at the Pompey Club for the fifth-annual Golf for Grads event. This golf tournament benefiting On Point is planned and executed entirely by an amazing committee of volunteers.

With more than 130 golfers, plenty of generous sponsors, great weather and the club's excellent food, everyone seemed to agree that this year's golf tournament was the biggest and best ever. The tournament grossed \$45,000, which will greatly benefit On Point.

On Point for College would like to thank all golfers, sponsors, the golf committee and the wonderful staff at the Pompey Club.

Special thanks go out to event founder and Chair George Nazzaro, Co-Chair Beth Leibrick, keynote speaker Bud Poliquin, and On Point student speakers Maurisha Knighton and Majak Dut.

Thank you! From everyone at On Point, we all had a great time and we hope you did too. See you next year!



Meet some of our graduates!

Clockwise, from left, are: Bentray Reed (Herkimer), Deonna Houston and Jasmine Jatore Ohore (Cobleskill), Yanetta Mathis (Cazenovia), Jessica Cawley (Morrisville), Annette Monasterio and Martina Mason (OCC), and Dylan Brown (OCC).



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Your support is appreciated

This year, we're sending more than 350 students to college – 98 percent are the first in their families to attend college.

With our new college enrollees, we'll support nearly 1,500 students in college this semester. We couldn't do this without our 160 valued mentors and volunteers, who open their hearts to our students.

Donations are welcomed. It costs about \$1,000 to help a young person enroll in college and provide them with college supplies and enrollment fees.

All donations are tax deductible. If your means allow it, please consider donating by sending us the form to the right. We are so grateful for your support.

Can you grant a wish?

As a small not-for-profit, we make do with what we have – but we're always looking out for donated items that could help us serve our students better. Here is our latest "wish list":

- New desktop computers
- Lightweight laptops suitable for student use
- A fax machine
- Gift cards to Staples
- A new van to transport students
- Flash drives
- Office chairs
- Mentors, tutors and drivers
- New dorm room supplies (comforters, pillows, sheet sets, backpacks, five-subject notebooks, toiletries, and electric alarm clocks)

If you can donate any of the above supplies, call (315) 362-5003, e-mail asereht5@hotmail.com or stop by our office at 1654 West Onondaga Street, Syracuse, in the back of the Catholic Charities building.

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of \$ _____

Please make check payable to:
On Point for College, 1654 W. Onondaga St., Syracuse, NY 13204

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Students honored for service



Pictured, from left, are: James Redfearn, Bill Reichardt, Sabra Reichardt, Lotan Mitchell, Raymond Blackwell, Charity Ntansah, Ray Williams, and Arian Bradford.

On July 13, friends of On Point for College, Mercy Works and the Reichardt family gathered at Ryder Park in DeWitt to honor six students with the 2011 Servant Leader Scholarship Awards.

The awards, which honor exceptional community service and volunteerism, were presented by the Barney II Foundation – the family foundation of Bill

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'Barney II' ...from page 7

and Sabra Reichardt of Fayetteville.

Bill and Sabra are longtime On Point for College mentors and friends of the program. They started the Barney II Foundation to recognize students who give back to their community through volunteerism, service and leadership.

The 2011 award winners are:

- Arian Bradford, who is studying psychology at Onondaga Community College and hopes to open her own psychiatric hospital;
- Ray Williams, a graduate of OCC with honors, and an outreach worker with SNUG who mediates conflicts and advocates against gun use;

- James Redfearn, who earned a degree in recreational science from OCC and personal trainer certification and is giving back to On Point by giving Early Awareness presentations and driving students to campus;

- Lotan Mitchell, a graduate of Columbia College who is a firefighter for the city of Syracuse;

- Raymond Blackwell, a junior at Long Island University majoring in history, who has been speaking professionally for a year; and

- Charity Ntansah, a native of Ghana and a sophomore at Syracuse University majoring in pre-med and public health.

Our students say thanks!

Bobby, Buffalo State: "You truly put a smile on my face today, and inspire me to contribute to society every single day."

Tyrone: "You have no idea how much this means to me. I knew I couldn't do it on my own. Thank you."

Shanika, OCC: "I am proud to say that I am the first in my family to graduate high school and go on to college. Thank you."

Leroy: "Thank you for believing in me."

Jamel, Morgan State, Baltimore: "I am the first in my family to go to college. Thank you for making my American Dream come true."

Make a secure donation online!

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