DAVID

David is a former participant from our Margaret’s Place program at Brooklyn Academy of Science & the Environment (BASE). He has been an alumni intern for four years, and has worked at Eagle Academy, BASE, JHS143, and Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science. These are David’s reflections on the peer yearbook and the past year.

After we realized that the peer leaders couldn’t have the summit in person, we realized we still had to honor the work they put in this year and showcase their efforts. That’s where the idea for a peer leader yearbook came in. We wanted to have a collage of all the fantastic work our peer leaders did this year and we wanted to connect all the peer leaders together. We hoped the takeaway is that during a rough school year, they were able to have some positive memories of being together and working on a project together. Also, I wanted the graduates to have memories from their time in peer leadership. What stood out to me this year from our staff was the effort they put in was amazing they consistently thought about how they could reach out and interact with peer leaders virtually. What I plan to take with me after this year is to always make the attempt; even if you think people aren’t listening, it doesn’t hurt to make the attempt.
ISAAC

Isaac is a former participant from Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science. He has been an alumni intern for two years, and has worked at the College Academy in Washington Heights. These are Isaac’s reflections on the peer yearbook and the past year.

Our original plan was to have a big summit where we could celebrate the peer leaders with content created by them, such as artwork, videos, workshops, act out a scenario – which we would have loved to see. We wanted to do something still, because it’s not fair to those students who worked hard to graduate to not have much to celebrate after because of a virus. We couldn't imagine leaving things as they were. We wanted to give them the appreciation they deserve while also respecting social distancing. I hope what they gain or take away is a sense of pride; a moment of self-appreciation for themselves and for their peers who were there during the process of peer leadership; a moment of feeling they have accomplished or done something successful. Of course, I hope that they also honor our time together the way we honored them in this yearbook. What has stood out to me from our efforts to stay connected with peer leaders is the care and kindness that is given, regardless of who comes to the meetings or who is there for a short time. It's always good feeling to feel welcomed no matter what happens. What I take with me is the understanding and patience that I have been shown from Safe At Home, Margaret's Place, and the people I have worked with. Thank you for teaching me the kindness I know today, and how it has become a part of me becoming a better person than before.
The yearbook wasn’t part of our original end-of-the-year celebration for peer leadership. When we found out we wouldn’t be able to do the summit, it was upsetting because we knew the peer leaders had already started to put in work for it. But we wanted to do something for them that would still allow them to celebrate their time spent as peer leaders, especially because it would have been the last time some students experience peer leadership because they graduate this year. We all decided on the idea of a yearbook where we would be able to highlight some moments from peer leadership. We asked the peer leaders and Margaret’s Place counselors to include some advice for the graduating peer leaders. Some of my favorite quotes were, “Keep bringing those leadership skills to wherever you go next” and “to not be afraid of having critical discussions about issues that are important to them,” because I think it’s so important for the graduating peer leaders to continue using their voice and the skills they learned over the year to continue bringing change to the world they’re entering. As for the advice for continuing and future peer leaders, my favorite quotes were “what you have to say is important and you will be heard” and “Don’t be afraid to advocate for yourself and the things you care about” because for some students, they think that because they’re young, their voices and opinions won’t matter or have an impact. But I think it’s so important for them to learn the type of change that can come with being a part of peer leadership and learning these important skills and lessons.
ROKSANARA

Roksanara is a former participant from Brooklyn Academy of Science & the Environment (BASE). She has been an alumni intern for two years, and has worked at JHS217 and BASE. These are Roksanara’s reflections on the peer yearbook and the past year.

Our original plan was to have an end-of-the-year summit, all about the peer leaders. They were going to lead workshops, showcase their artwork and spoken word. We still wanted to do something, once we knew we could not do an in-person summit. We wanted to keep the tradition. The Yearbook is a way where the peer leaders have the chance to meet each other, even if it’s through a digital book. The thing we hope that the peer leaders get out of the yearbook is to see there are other students just like them, doing the same thing, raising awareness in their schools and community. Seeing their accomplishments for the past year will be shown and appreciated. The message is personal and reminds them of their time at Margaret’s Place. We hope the peer leaders get out of receiving the digital yearbook that they can reflect on the amazing work they have done the past year. One of my favorite quotes from the yearbook is by a Hostos peer leader: “Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself and the things you care about! Share what you're learning with others; it impacts and creates interest with everyone around you! Remember that you have an impact in your school, your community, and in the world!”