


- Americas Home
- Locations
- To Alls
- Internal News Archives
- External News

 [Print this page](#)

Americas

Finance Associate Connects South African Youth With New York City Professionals

11 Mar 2010

Carol Liu, an associate in the Finance Division, was part of a unique cross-cultural experience that bridged professionals in New York City and underprivileged youth in South Africa. Over the course of two weeks this past January, Carol helped to organize the first in-person meetings between a group of high school seniors from the Cape Flats area of Cape Town and their mentors in New York City.

This trip was the culmination of a year-long program sponsored by Active Compassion Transforms (ACT), a nonprofit that uses mentorship to assist youth in developing countries. Carol, along with a group of New York City professionals, volunteered their time every week to communicate with a mentee on topics to help them through their everyday challenges. As Carol mentored her mentee, she completed curriculum, provided by ACT, on improving one's self-esteem, harnessing values, overcoming adversity, achieving goals, and understanding the importance of staying in school.

"Participating in this program has motivated me to do something outside of myself and my world, and the beauty of this is that I can continue to help the mentees from New York," Carol said. "ACT has changed my mentality and encouraged me to continue my community involvement."

The trip to New York added another layer to this program for both the mentors and the mentees. Besides meeting each other, the mentees were able to shadow professionals in their field of interest, attend motivational seminars from leaders including Kevin Singleton, a former professional basketball player in Europe and founder of the nonprofit Elevate New York, and experience the arts including a concert at the Julliard School of Music and a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The students also volunteered with their mentors, participated in classroom lessons at New York City public schools and toured the United Nations.

"This journey has brought change in so many ways in my life, just becoming confident and allowing myself to find bit by bit of who Lee-Ann is," Lee-Ann, one of the mentees, said. "It has made me want to go and make a difference back home in my community if not yet my country."

Carol truly enjoyed her role as a mentor in this program and currently serves on the board of directors of ACT. She first became interested in mentoring through participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program at Goldman Sachs, where employees mentored students from a Lower East Side high school twice a month. Upon completion of this program, a former classmate of hers founded ACT and asked her to become involved based on her mentoring experience. As part of her experience with ACT, Carol had the opportunity to travel to Cape Town this past summer to volunteer at the School of Hope. She completed activities including helping with the school's graduation ceremony, aiding with classroom lesson plans and chaperoning on field trips.

"It was not until I spoke to the local residents that I really understood how South Africa's past and present turmoil – apartheid, civil war, political struggles, AIDS – affects their lives today," Carol said.

Many of the students in the mentoring program live in impoverished communities around Cape Town filled with crime, violence, teenage pregnancy, high HIV/AIDS infection rates, and high school dropout rates. ACT believes that e-mentoring will encourage students to finish high school, continue their education in university and trade school and create a sense of ownership within their community.

With the first successful year of the mentoring program completed, Carol hopes to continue her support here in New York by speaking with others and getting them involved with ACT. It's been an encouragement for her to share her experiences with co-workers, friends and former colleagues. She believes this is one easy way for us to contribute our time and talents to alleviate poverty by influencing the communities where it has started.



Carol pictured with Bianca, a student in ACT's 2010 mentoring program



Mentees shadow a diabetes nurse at Columbia University's Diabetes Center.



A snapshot of the 2010 mentee class