CAMBA believes that all youth, whether rich or poor, need support while growing up and transitioning successfully into adulthood. Our Career and College Preparation programs help more than 1,000 high school students and out-of-school youth earn their high school diplomas, prepare for college life, build financial literacy skills, gain meaningful work experience and explore new career opportunities every year.

All across the country this time of year, high school seniors are spending days and nights putting together their college applications — a culmination of four years of hard work. It is a daunting, complicated task, but many students receive guidance from generations of college graduates in their families. It is especially difficult for a student whose parents never applied for or attended college.

Such is the case for 17-year old Tahreem a Midwood High School senior whose Pakistani immigrant parents received no schooling past high school. For students like her who may feel adrift, that’s where CAMBA’s Collegiate Express comes in — a four-year program that begins guiding students from freshman year in high school.

“The program makes me realize that there are more options... that there is not just one way to go to school,” said Tahreem, meaning a two-year or four-year college.

In Collegiate Express, Tahreem receives support that includes college test prep, assistance with her college essay writing, visits to various campuses outside NYC, and assistance with applying for financial aid and scholarships. She says the program has made what could be an overwhelming process “fun” to navigate.

“We play a Jeopardy-like game that has questions about a range of issues to make sure you understand grants, tuitions, and the various specialties of different colleges. And the college visits — that was the best. Everyone should go to one. They show you what a campus looks like, what a dorm room looks like. It’s really very helpful.”

Tahreem hopes all the help lands her in college when she graduates in 2019. She has chosen nursing for her career. Tahreem watched and was impressed by the medical professionals who took care of a younger sister who was struggling with a chronic illness. Tahreem decided she also wanted to make a living guiding people from sickness to good health. CAMBA’s Collegiate Express Director put her in touch with a registered nurse who explained the different approaches Tahreem could take to securing a nursing degree, either through a two-year or four-year degree.
developed an individualized career plan based on goals, skill levels, barriers, and needs. Ulysses (see story above) came to us when he found himself unemployed for the first time in 23 years. He completed our security guard training and also paired those classes with our customer service training, which boosted his access to job opportunities. CAMBA placed 1,028 people in jobs in 2017 — and 97 percent of those jobs were full-time.

HEALTH
CAMBA’s health programs serve the body and mind, offering services to help New Yorkers manage their healthcare, access emergency food, and keep their communities safe from disease and violence. Our services include evidence-based interventions that support women, a social marketing project for parents of LGBTQ youth to promote acceptance called Project ALY, and a condom distribution program. Our Young Men’s Health Project program provides comprehensive prevention and support services to 300 young men who have sex with men from ages 13 – 29 each year, including individuals who identify as transgender or gender nonconforming. The importance of this program is no laughing matter, but CAMBA employee Kareem Youngblood discovered his natural comedic gifts helped enhance his educating youth on these important matters.

BIVO
Cure Violence is a national, evidence-based model that identifies violently injured youth at risk for retaliatory gun violence. CAMBA adapted the Cure Violence model in our work with these young people, their families and friends to help prevent future gun violence through our project, Brownsville In Violence Out (BIVO). Participants receive a variety of supportive services aimed at reducing their risk for being involved in gun violence. We’re proud of success stories (see page 3) like Zaquan’s that demonstrate the program’s positive impact. Since BIVO implemented the model in the 73rd Precinct in 2015, shooting incidents have been reduced by 25 percent, compared to roughly 10 percent citywide. 😊

“MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT...” CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

My advice to all enrollees is to never give up and stay with CAMBA until you reach your goals.”

Whether you’re unemployed, seeking career advice or trying to get skills training, CAMBA’s Workforce Development programs can assist a person in turning his/her life around. Such was the case three years ago when Ulysses Vazquez became involved with CAMBA when he found himself unemployed and on public assistance after being a Home Health Aide for 23 years. The married father of two entered CAMBA’s Jobs to Build On (JTBO) program.

“I had to pay my rent and pay my bills and CAMBA gave me an opportunity to become a security officer, and I also got my customer service skills,” recalls Ulysses. Ulysses now works as a Security Supervisor with Brosnan Risk, a highly ranked security firm that provides guards to financial and other institutions. Through JTBO, he received his security guard license and customer service communications certificates. The training taught him to effectively handle clients, which has proven to be very useful in his current position. Ulysses adds, “The customer services training was the most helpful because it boosted my confidence and energy for my future job.”

After completing his certificates at CAMBA and gaining security experience, Ulysses became a Brosnan Security staff officer at a bank client. Brosnan Security called and asked if he was interested in a supervisory position, which Ulysses readily accepted, and he is now supervising

CONTINUE TO PAGE 4
CAMBA provides prevention services for people living with HIV/AIDS and populations at risk of HIV transmission. In Brooklyn, these services are especially critical as the number of new HIV cases continues to increase and remains the highest of all NYC boroughs. Our Young Men's Health Project (YMHP) is part of our efforts to significantly reduce the number of HIV transmissions among men of color in Brooklyn.

As CAMBA’s Prevention Supervisor for the YMHP, Kareem Youngblood uses a unique communication skill in reaching teens and young adults about HIV prevention—humor. His presentation is not only educational and informational, but often hilarious.

“I talk about my life and the times I thought I was [HIV] positive. It’s something we all deal with. I talk about how everything Google said would happen happened. How you pray and make promises to never do it again, and to give to charity. In the classroom I make sure to run though the symptom list; I have had all of them.”

Kareem has since turned his gift for humor into a side gig doing standup at comedy clubs after a teacher who observed him delivering a workshop at a middle school encouraged his comic pursuit. He never stops teaching even at open mic night performances. Kareem often seamlessly weaves in facts about HIV and STD prevention during his monologues.

In workshops, Kareem typically ends by making a joke about digestive problems he feared might be dangerous symptoms for an entire summer: “I just didn’t know I was lactose intolerant — and I love ice cream!”

While Kareem continues to dazzle audiences with his comedy sets, he remains dedicated to serving and educating populations at risk of HIV. While the two roles may not seem to relate, Kareem adds, “nothing I do relates to anything but who I am. I do what I love to do, no matter what!”

Where You Can Laugh for a Greater Impact

Before he became involved with CAMBA, Zayquan saw a lot of violence in his life: He watched his younger brother get shot, he lost several good friends who were killed, and he once was stabbed. Zayquan felt as if his only options were “to kill, or be killed.”

Zayquan’s life turned around once he secured a summer job through Brownsville In Violence Out’s (BIVO) Anti-Gun Violence Summer Youth Employment Program. “An older cat that I called my older brother… he was just around my neighborhood… and asked us if we wanted jobs, and we said ‘yeah,’ because none of us was working. It changed my life, it got me out of the streets.”

BIVO is an anti-violence program that uses the Cure Violence model that treats neighborhood violence as a public health issue. The model entails detecting and interrupting conflicts as they arise, identifying and treating individuals who are high-risk, and changing their social norms. BIVO gave Zayquan the wakeup call and the fresh start he needed by introducing him to a safer lifestyle.

“I was living a bad life carrying numerous weapons and they (BIVO staff) told me what would happen if I continued doing what I was doing. My mom had just passed away and that was a big thing on me,” said Zayquan in explaining the difficulties he faced as a young adult in Brownsville.

Zayquan decided to own what he learned at BIVO and now works as a Violence Interrupter for a Crowd Heights program called Save Our Streets (SOS). A Violence Interrupter is a community member previously involved with a gang or violent activity, who now intervenes in conflicts brewing in the neighborhood. The model proves effective because once young people in the community see Violence Interrupters practicing alternatives to violence, they will want to follow suit.

Zayquan continues to thrive by showing kids in similar environments with his actions that it is possible to walk on a healthy and safe path regardless of your background.

“If they see a person like me doing it, they will say if he can do it, why can’t I?”
“...SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Brosnan staff at various bank locations. Ulysses says that the most difficult part of the job is “keeping the performance standards of the guards at a high level, with the goal of exceeding customer’s expectations.” Each day, he works to make sure that bank managers are happy with the performance and appearance of the guards posted to their location.

Ulysses has offered to mentor clients currently enrolled in CAMBA’s JTBO and Security Guard Training programs, and plans to interview guards who complete the training.

“My advice to all enrollees is to never give up and stay with CAMBA until you reach your goals. CAMBA opened the doors for me and it can open the doors for you if you stay committed.”

“...COLLEGE A REALITY” CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Tahreem has her eye on a specific school and program here in NYC, but is open to the possibility of living on campus at a SUNY school. She still finds time for volleyball, planning for her prom and hanging out with her friends. Eventually, she will spend time learning to take care of others.