

QUAD

Putting the Other
Fellow First

10 to 12 families in each community all working on each other's houses. No one moves in until all the houses are completed, a mandate that helps to foster a deep sense of commitment and community on the families' part. The organization has also rehabilitated more than 5,000 homes, and developed more than

years later, his wife—"So I stayed," Peter says.

"One of the things I think schools today are missing—and which draws me to speak at schools—is an understanding that there are careers like mine. So often I talk about the mistaken notion people have that you can either do well or do good, but not both. What

with kids" when Rocking the Boat (RTB) first got started in 1996. He never dreamed it would take off as it has, growing from a volunteer project to its own independent non-profit organization in five short years. Today, RTB has developed into a fully sustainable organization with a staff of 16 (some part-time) that operates both boat-building and environmental education programs for more than 150 young adults each year.

RTB utilizes a hands-on approach to education and youth development, Adam explains, addressing the need for inner city youth to achieve practical and tangible goals that are relevant to everyday life and future aspirations. "This process allows high school students to acquire practical, academic, and social skills. During the process of building a traditional wooden boat, Rocking the Boat students create something not only beautiful, but practical in their own lives, bridging urban and natural life within their neighborhood," he adds. "This approach is mirrored in the on-water education program," Adam continues, "through direct focus on Bronx River habitat monitoring and restoration, and through maritime life skills programming. Both programs allow students opportunities to gain a deeper awareness of their own abilities and possibilities in the natural and urban world."

The organization runs three after-school and summer programs in each discipline annually. Many students travel from other boroughs to RTB's storefront in the southwest



A BUILD student works on her entrepreneurial project.



Silicon Valley businesspeople mentor students in the BUILD program.

750 units of rental housing throughout a 15,000-square-mile service area. Finally, SHE provides technical assistance to small communities that are working to meet their sewer, water, and other community development needs.

Peter joined SHE in 1974 as a contractor, and has held a variety of positions within the organization. He says he was "always doing technical theater work behind the scenes of Riverdale's infamous "hairy leg" musicals. In March of 1974 he volunteered at SHE doing construction work, where he subsequently fell in love with the organization, the community, and, two

drives us at SHE is both. It creates tension, but that's where our success is," Peter explains.

The importance of a decent home for children is what motivates Peter and SHE. "I talk to kids who say that until they had their new home, they were afraid other kids would follow them home and see where they lived. They were ashamed. And I talk to parents who feel they have failed their kids. It's really an investment in kids, so they have a chance for a different life, one they might not have gotten otherwise."

BUILDING BOATS AND CHANGING LIVES

Adam Green '91 says that he "just wanted to build a boat

Bronx. The boat-building shop is a haven for students, and the program offers them advice and tutoring in school as well as any outside counseling they might need. Participation in RTB earns school credit for students, who are required to come after school twice a week for three and a half hours, starting at 4 pm. Many students spend far more time at RTB than required, however, a testament both to Adam and his dedicated staff, many of whom are themselves former RTB students.

"We're trying to give kids a better sense of the world around them," says Adam. "I give them a lot of responsibility and room for mistakes and a lot of compassion." These are the same qualities Riverdale strives to give its students, too, proving that a Riverdale education endures.

PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

Suzanne McKechnie Klahr '90 founded BUILD in 1999 with funding from a two-year, public service fellowship