Ripples of Hope
A Special Edition of A Better Way Forward

Manchester Bidwell Corporation Newsletter | Issue 10 | Spring 2014
We would like to extend special thanks to all our friends who helped make Bidwell Training Center’s 2014 Jesse W. Fife Jr. Fabric of Our Community celebration and 2014 annual commencement ceremony possible.

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Dear Friends of Manchester Bidwell:

For over 40 years, Manchester Bidwell Corporation (MBC) has developed successful strategies to address low educational achievement among youth and high unemployment rates among adults. The Manchester Bidwell educational model uses the arts to achieve on-time high school graduation among youth and career training and education to transition adults from unemployment and underemployment into local entry-level careers. The work of MBC is nationally and internationally recognized, externally evaluated and, most importantly, highly valued by the youth and adults whose lives we have helped transform.

Our affiliated program, the National Center for Arts & Technology (NCAT), works with communities to adapt and utilize the Manchester Bidwell educational model to address each community’s specific needs. By viewing every person as an asset, fostering a beautiful and safe environment and encouraging creativity as a means to fuel enterprise, the Manchester Bidwell educational model helps youth and adults become productive society members and addresses the most pressing needs in communities around the world. The Manchester Bidwell educational model also encourages local Centers for Arts & Technology (CATs) to develop social enterprise ventures designed to support their operations. Perhaps the most important aspect of replication is fostering a culture of hope among staff and students based on MBC’s core values, which are respect, listen, shape, embrace and influence.
Deb Difatta’s Story:
From Broken to Whole

Deb Difatta seems to have a charmed life. She has a nice house in a good neighborhood, a partner that adores her and a solid career path as a medical coder. She radiates respect, happiness and goodwill. However, she did not always; in the not-so-distant past, Deb was a self-declared “broken woman.”

“My daughter Melissa, when she was 15, was diagnosed with cancer. At the same time, my husband turned to alcohol and became unspeakably abusive,” says Deb. “I was so beaten down by the abuse that I had no self-worth. I didn’t think I deserved human decency.”

After ending her marriage, Deb tried to start getting her life moving in a positive direction. She enrolled in Pennsylvania Women Work, a nonprofit for employment services that result in family-sustaining wages for displaced homemakers and women-in-transition. Through this program, she learned about MBC’s adult career training program, Bidwell Training Center (BTC), and subsequently enrolled in the Medical Coder major. However, Deb had to delay her start when Melissa’s cancer returned. After a prolonged battle, Deb’s daughter passed. To honor Melissa’s memory, Deb knew she had to move forward with her schooling.

“This place is magic. It gives you hope when you think you have none. It turned a broken woman—me—into a whole woman,” she says.

Deb graduated in 2012 from BTC and has since moved up the ranks as a medical coder for UPMC, one of the leading nonprofit health systems in the United States. In addition to her work for UPMC, Deb actively promotes The Melissa Difatta Undergraduate Nonfiction Award, which was created in memory of her daughter. She is also pursuing the goal of having 30,000 people read her daughter’s memoir, The Bone Marrow Queen (available for free on Scribd.com).

“I’m no longer displaced. I have a job and a purpose. How can that not benefit society?” Deb says.
In the 1950s, the Manchester community in Pittsburgh where Bill Strickland grew up was filled with neat row houses and green trees. People could find good jobs locally, and the neighborhood of roughly 40,000 people was culturally diverse. But when hard times hit in the 1960s, many local businesses shut down, and the character of the community began to change.

Bill Strickland recalls his world narrowing, “I’d watched my neighborhood go from a healthy community to a ghetto. I needed to find a way out. But there weren’t many examples of successful people in my community who could serve as role models.” And then one Wednesday in September 1963 at the age of 16, Strickland met his mentor Frank Ross, discovered the power of ceramics, and awoke to the possibility that the world might have something more to offer.

It was Ross who instilled in Strickland a gutsy perspective on public education. “Look, there’s nothing wrong with you. There’s a lot wrong with the circumstances that you find yourself in. You have the talent and the resources to take control of your life and to do something more than you’ve done up to this point,” Ross told the young Strickland. It was Ross’ belief in Strickland’s potential and his willingness to mentor the teen that served as the vital first drop, causing a ripple effect resulting in a global movement to cure cancer of the spirit, reform education and repair broken communities.

When Strickland graduated from high school in 1965, he was admitted to the University of Pittsburgh on academic probation, having spent his high school years focusing on ceramics instead of test results. But Strickland quickly asserted himself and landed on the dean’s list by the end of his first year. He would eventually join the University’s board of trustees and serve as a commencement speaker. In his commencement address, Strickland reminded the graduates to challenge their first impressions by remembering not to give up on the poor kids because, like him, those kids just might be the commencement speakers of the future.

Despite his expanding world, Strickland remained committed to his neighborhood. In 1968 in the midst of social upheaval and rioting in Manchester, Strickland created a local afterschool, arts program for youth and brought hope back to the streets. Youth who attended the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild (MCG) program learned the same pottery skills that had originally motivated Strickland, and many of them became better engaged in school and in their community. Strickland continued his work with MCG, building a staff of committed volunteers, earning a name for himself as a local activist, and cobbling together funds from small grants and contributions by community leaders and school officials who witnessed the powerful impact of his work.

In 1972, Strickland was asked to take over the Bidwell Training Center, a struggling, fledgling neighborhood vocational-training program that was started in response to the 1968 riots. Strickland accepted the challenge and took the opportunity to play out his core beliefs on a larger scale. While the combination of youth arts education and adult career-training seemed an unlikely marriage of programs, Strickland saw the combined programs as a way to rebuild the community—by saving troubled youth and getting them on a path to college and also by investing in adults who had been discarded by society and giving them a fresh start in life. To fortify the connection between the programs, Strickland created the parent company, Manchester Bidwell Corporation, in 1999.

Above story adapted from:
The Manchester Bidwell Corporation culture comprises three core philosophies:

1. People are assets, not liabilities;
2. Environment shapes behavior; and
3. Creativity fuels enterprise.

The Manchester Bidwell educational model fully activates the company’s core philosophies by dedicating a community’s resources to creating an inspiring, safe and educational environment where youth and adults can find hope and rebuild their lives. The Manchester Bidwell education model includes three basic components:

1. **Youth arts programming** – Through the arts and its inherent democratic nature, young people learn, create and celebrate their unique contributions to the community, begin to understand their connections to the world at large and are in position to become productive members of society. This program is known as MCG Youth & Arts or, affectionately, as “The Guild;”

2. **Adult career training** – Getting straight to the heart of MBC’s market-oriented operating philosophy, adult career training programs match the needs of individuals with the needs of local industry. This program—known as Bidwell Training Center—provides adults who are unemployed and in transition with the training and education to rebuild their lives and secure careers working for diverse local companies. Graduates of adult career training perform well among their peers—both in terms of job-related skills and soft skills—and they are out of poverty within one year and giving back to their own community; and

3. **Social enterprise** – “Entrepreneurs are, by definition, visionaries. They can visualize something that doesn’t exist. Artists are by nature entrepreneurs. I see a connection between the creativity instilled by a love of the arts, and the skills needed for business success,” says MBC President and CEO Bill Strickland. By connecting the arts and enterprise, the Manchester Bidwell educational model promotes social ventures, including a jazz concert hall that is home to an innovative GRAMMY® Award–winning record label (MCG Jazz) and a 40,000-square-foot greenhouse where MBC grows its signature orchids as well as other seasonal plants and flowers for local wholesale (The Drew Mathieson Center for Horticultural and Agricultural Technology).

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**Comparative High School Graduation Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Pittsburgh Public Schools</th>
<th>MBC’s Youth Arts Program</th>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Adult Career Training Quantitative Return on Investment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Blended Cost of Tuition*</th>
<th>Average BTC Graduate Starting Salary**</th>
<th>Students Served</th>
<th>Student Graduation Rate**</th>
<th>Student Placement Rate**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>$13,775</td>
<td>$23,055</td>
<td>Approx. 200</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–13</td>
<td>$13,085</td>
<td>$24,028</td>
<td>Approx. 150</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Across all Bidwell Training Center majors.
** As reported in Bidwell Training Center’s Annual Reports to the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges.

Based on the above, the average taxes paid per year by a graduate of an adult career training major who obtains employment in their field are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Federal: (Per Tax Table assuming single)</th>
<th>Pennsylvania: (3.07%)</th>
<th>Local: (City of Pittsburgh 3%)</th>
<th>Total:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>$3,011</td>
<td>$706</td>
<td>$690</td>
<td>$4,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–13</td>
<td>$2,860</td>
<td>$738</td>
<td>$721</td>
<td>$4,319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The idea of scaling the Manchester Bidwell educational model first arose through the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild (MCG) Jazz program of Manchester Bidwell Corporation (MBC). In 1989, with the encouragement of MCG Jazz friend and acclaimed musician Dr. Billy Taylor, Dizzy Gillespie performed in MCG’s 350-seat music hall. Mr. Gillespie was deeply moved by his experience at MCG. Gillespie believed that MBC’s philosophies and programming were a “big idea” that should be in every city in the United States. With this in mind, Gillespie donated the recording of his MCG performance to MBC.

Word quickly spread throughout the jazz community and such luminaries as Herbie Hancock, Nancy Wilson and Paquito D’Rivera—to name only a few—came to perform at MCG. Several of these musicians went on to win GRAMMY® Awards for their recordings on the MCG Jazz label. Hancock also went on to provide piano accompaniment during MBC CEO Bill Strickland’s 2002 TED talk, which has received nearly 500,000 views since its original broadcast.

Philanthropist and Social Entrepreneur Jeff Skoll was also so deeply impacted by the TED talk that he approached Strickland about scaling the Manchester Bidwell educational model for replication. With funding from the Skoll Foundation, the National Center for Arts & Technology (NCAT) was started.

NCAT offers a combination of adult career training, youth arts education and social enterprise to successfully address the comprehensive needs of local communities around the world. The powerful fusion of mentorship, the arts, education and hope creates a safe space where youth and adults can transform their lives. The strategy of NCAT, a nonprofit program of MBC, is to replicate the Manchester Bidwell educational model in 100 cities across the United States and another 100 cities around the world.

All Centers for Arts and Technology are yielding positive results in the communities they serve. For example, the West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (WMCAT), which began its program in the fall of 2005, offers adult career training in medical billing, medical coding and pharmacy technology. In 2012–13, 83 percent of WMCAT career-training program graduates were placed in careers with an average hourly starting wage of $13.19. During the same time period, 84 percent of high-school seniors who attended the WMCAT youth arts program graduated on time and expressed interest pursuing post-secondary education.

To view Bill Strickland’s TED talk:
http://www.ted.com/talks/bill_strickland_makes_change_with_a_slide_show.html

To date, NCAT has helped to open eight Centers for Arts and Technology (CATs) across the United States. Currently, NCAT is working with 10 additional cities in the United States to create CATs, and NCAT is also working with 65 other cities nationally that have expressed interest in replicating the Manchester Bidwell educational model.

Stories of the transformative power of the Manchester Bidwell educational model abound. Echoing Strickland’s own journey is that of MBC youth program alumnus Marko Biddle (below).

Marko Biddle’s Story:
Following a Crush & Finding a Connection
Growing up in a rough neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Marko Biddle spent much of his time in high school in various living arrangements with no place to call home. By the time Marko was a freshman in high school, he was failing most of his classes and his guidance counselors seemed to have lost faith in his ability to succeed. At that time, Marko followed his high school crush to MBC’s youth arts education program and enrolled in studio arts classes. “Instead of falling in love with the girl, I fell in love with MBC,” Marko recalls. Marko quickly found a home at MBC, “at first attending MBC was just something to do, but then it became the thing I wanted to do with my life.”

While attending MBC, Marko found his calling in the ceramics studio. “I failed my first ceramics class in high school and wanted nothing to do with clay at all. While at MBC, my instructors inspired my creativity and gave me the means to express it
Since 1968, the Manchester Bidwell educational model has been honored with a variety of prestigious national awards. Highlights include:

- Eleven GRAMMY nominations with six GRAMMY wins for the MCG Jazz recording label;
- Four Harvard Business School case studies—Manchester Bidwell Corporation and Apple are the only two companies in the history of the Harvard Business School to have been the focus of four case studies;
- MacArthur “Genius” award in 1996 for which Bill Strickland was honored for “exceptional merit and promise for continued and enhanced creative work;”
- A “Coming Up Taller” award presented in a White House ceremony by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1998;
- Six-year appointment of Strickland by President George Bush as a Council Member of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and Chairman of the Expansion Arts Panel of the NEA;
- Selection of Strickland by President Barack Obama to serve as a member of the bipartisan White House Council for Community Solutions in December 2010;
- 2012 School of Excellence designation by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges for Bidwell Training Center; and
- Selection of Strickland by U.S. Senate to receive proclamation in commemoration of Black History Month in 2013.

coming up taller

In communities across America, poets and actors, dancers and musicians, painters and museum curators and other caring adults are helping children discover their creative potential in the arts and humanities. They are offering children safe, stable environments in which to learn and providing them the opportunity to develop their skills and aspirations. That is what Coming Up Taller is all about.

Shortly after the President’s Committee report was released, I went to see one of these programs in action for myself. I went to Pittsburgh to visit the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, which is also one of today’s honorees. As I watched children who did everything from molding clay to developing their own photographs, I saw tangible results.

More than three quarters of the students in that program went on to college, compared to only 20 percent of those in the community from which they came. Recent national research shows that the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild is not an isolated case. It documents precisely what the President’s Committee observed. Quality afterschool and summer school arts programs can make a tremendous difference in young people’s lives.

Those who participate in such programs are more likely to win academic honors, more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to go on to college….The Attorney General and I have discussed many times that the juvenile crime rates are highest in the unsupervised afterschool hours. We know that many children have nothing to do and have nowhere to go when they are not in school. Sometimes they find trouble, or trouble finds them. More often, they are simply bored to tears.

Arts and music programs like the ones we honor here today give children something to say yes to. They help them find their voices and help them discover their dreams. So as we celebrate these outstanding programs in 10 communities, I hope we can send a powerful signal to every community and that is that arts and humanities for children are not luxuries. It is an opportunity for every community to build stronger citizens, to have safer streets, to create more productive young people. We have to stand firm in making the argument that every child deserves to have something positive and positive role models in their lives.

—First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton


Through ceramics,” Marko says. He quickly realized the endless potential for a bright future and focused on graduating from high school and going on to college, often doubling his class load to graduate on time.

After graduating from high school in 2000, Marko attended an art education program at a local university and began an internship at MBC. Marko was hired as a full-time teaching artist at MBC and continued working there for two years after earning his bachelor’s degree in 2004. Marko went on to work for nine years as a full-time art teacher at various high schools in Pennsylvania, finally landing a job in the Pittsburgh Public School District.

During a medical leave, Marko was approached by MBC staff to become the director of the youth arts program at the Brockway Center for Arts & Technology in Pennsylvania, which opened in May 2013. Marko was thrilled to accept the position, saying, “I would have been lost without MBC—never graduating from high school or going to college. Everything I have today is because of MBC. As the director of the youth arts program in Brockway, I am sharing the experiences that saved my life.”
Since the day an art teacher changed his life, Bill Strickland has been paying it forward. He began with youth in his Manchester neighborhood. He expanded to adults in need of jobs in the Pittsburgh region. He built a world-class training center and watched his dream of cultivating the human spirit become a reality. Youth graduated from high school on time and unemployed adults found jobs. **To date, the Manchester Bidwell educational model has been replicated in eight U.S. cities.**

Strickland’s uncommon passion for seeing human potential realized has birthed an international dream. His commitment to populations that are underserved has brought him face to face with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, landed him before England’s House of Lords, permitted him an opportunity to host the Archbishop of Canterbury, and given him presentation opportunities at the University of Oxford as part of the Skoll World Forum.

Strickland’s passion for humanity has also garnered international recognition. For his work to bring a center to Akko, Israel, he was honored with the Pursuer of Peace Award by Rodef Shalom Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Goi Peace Award was bestowed upon him by members of the royal family in Japan in recognition of his stature as a global humanitarian.

As recognition of the Manchester Bidwell educational model as a solution to human suffering increases, so does interest in replicating the model among international cities. The National Center for Arts & Technology (NCAT) is currently in discussions with the following 11 countries:

- Australia
- France
- Jamaica
- South Korea
- Bahamas
- England
- Japan
- The Netherlands
- Canada
- Israel
- Nigeria

International engagements show great promise in addressing the broader needs of global communities, especially where populations of refugees and immigrants continue to grow and there is generational poverty. As part of this global focus, NCAT is launching the International Fellows program, which is currently being designed to identify and train leaders from prospective international sites. The international fellows will serve as points of contact and lead local sponsoring organizations and steering committees in replicating the Manchester Bidwell educational model in their respective cities.

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Regardless of country, culture, ethnicity or faith, hope is universally accepted as necessary for life. I am convinced that Manchester Bidwell’s ability to seemingly manufacture hope through our educational model is the reason that people from around the world want to learn more about what we do.

— MBC Executive Vice President and COO Paulo Nzambi

MBC teaching artist Jill Wiggins (left) provides a hands-on screen printing demonstration.

O Font is too small.
Like a raindrop in a pond, the Manchester Bidwell educational model is producing ripples of hope among those interested in rectifying the plight of the poor. MBC’s ideology and practices have changed the way individuals and organizations address the needs of people who are disadvantaged. MBC’s innovative approach to youth arts education and adult career training has produced unparalleled results in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where the organization is based. The model is also expanding nationally. The ripples of each CAT’s success have now transcended America’s borders and are being felt internationally.

After London was set ablaze in 2011, concerned citizens began looking for an effective way to address the isolation and disappointment that fueled the fires of discontent. John Thornhill of the Financial Times (owned by Pearson PLC) traveled to Pittsburgh from London to see if the Manchester Bidwell educational model could be a crucial part of the solution to transform under-served communities in London and other UK cities. What was to be a short profile on the organization became a multi-page feature. Another employee of Pearson PLC now is volunteering her talent and time to create a London CAT.

In the city of Akko, Israel, U.S.-based lawyer Mark Frank sees the model as a tool for reconciling a centuries-old conflict between Muslims and Jews. Frank provided legal counsel to MBC during its fledgling years and saw how MBC brought poor blacks and whites together in the pursuit of a better life. Now many years later, Frank believes the Manchester Bidwell educational model can help overcome racial hatred and heal Israel’s religious divide. Working with Gal Dekel in Israel, Frank caught the attention of the Mayor of Akko who has donated land for the construction of the Northern Israel CAT.

In Japan, Gentaro Yui and Tachibana Takashi of Sweet Treat 311 are collaborating with NCAT to bring the Manchester Bidwell educational model to Ogatsu, a city in northern Japan devastated by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. With a youthful charisma that belies their years, these two talented entrepreneurs have committed to rebuilding the devastated region. After being introduced to the Manchester Bidwell educational model, they enlisted the assistance of Chika Sonehara of Benesse Corporation to help manage the project. Today, the three are raising funds to continue the renovation a 100-year-old school building that will serve as the site for youth programming and double as a revenue-generating retreat for city dwellers longing to reconnect with nature.

The ripples of MBC’s ever-increasing influence defy geographic boundaries, equipping anyone who believes in the value of the human spirit to become a harbinger of hope and leave an extraordinary legacy.
Manchester Bidwell Corporation would like to thank all of our supporters for their generosity. All gifts listed in this section are from January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013. Any gift received after December 31, 2013 will be listed in A Better Way Forward’s spring 2015 issue. All names are listed as requested by the donor.

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