

# Extra



**“It was an experience that continues to move in my mind, learning how an organization sees the value in people with disabilities and empowers them with skills.”**

*Evelyn Kpadeh of Liberia, after a recent visit to Lifestyles for the Disabled in Willowbrook*

PHOTO LEFT: Abdul Karim Kabia of Sierra Leone and Akosua Afriye Osei-Appaw of Ghana sort donated clothing at the Assumption Church soup kitchen in New Brighton.

## Non-profits embrace visiting African leaders

**Claire Regan**  
*For the Staten Island Advance*

**F**or Evelyn Kpadeh, a native of the West African country of Liberia, a recent visit to Lifestyles for the Disabled in Willowbrook was a transformative experience.

“Back home in my country, 80 percent of people with disabilities have no hope and they are left to roam the streets each day looking for what they can catch to survive,” Kpadeh shared.

At Lifestyles, Kpadeh and 24 other African citizens visiting Staten Island for six weeks this summer learned about the agency’s programs for the developmentally disabled and enjoyed lunch prepared by program participants in the Lifestyles Caffe.

“It was an experience that continues to move in my mind, learning how an organization sees the value in people with disabilities and empowers them with skills,” Kpadeh added.

As a participant in the Mandela Washington Fellowship, the flagship program of President Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), Kpadeh and 24 fellow Africans stayed at Wagner College on Grymes Hill, one of 38 institutions throughout the U.S. selected to host the State Department program.

Wagner has been a host institution since the initiative was launched in 2014.

More than 40,000 African leaders between the ages of 25 and 35 applied this year for the opportunity to study, train and network in the U.S., and only 1,000 were selected.

Their goal is to apply what they learn on American soil to the projects they direct in their homelands.

Wagner-appointed hub leaders and host families arranged events and facilitated connections that would best meet each fellow’s professional interests and help them feel at home on the Island.

### SIMILARITIES ACROSS 7,000 MILES

YALI fellow Butholezwe Kgosi Nyathi is programs manager at Amagugu Heritage Trust in Zimbabwe, where visitors learn about their culture through demonstrations of basket weaving, wood carving, leather tanning, nature walks, traditional games, dance and music.

It’s no surprise then that a meeting with Ed Wiseman, executive director of Historic



Carlotta DeFillo, an interpreter at Historic Richmond Town, guides the African fellows on a tour of the 18th-century kitchen in the Guyon-Lake-Tysen House. (Photos by Claire Regan for the Staten Island Advance)



Wagner College program brings them to our borough for six weeks of networking



PHOTO ABOVE LEFT: Akosua Afriye Osei-Appaw of Ghana and Mark Kaweesi of Uganda participate in a reading of the Declaration of Independence sponsored by Staten Island OutLOUD on the Fourth of July in historic Fort Wadsworth.

ABOVE RIGHT: Members of the NYPD on patrol at the South Beach boardwalk take a moment to pose with some of the African fellows from Wagner College.

PHOTO LEFT: During a visit to the historic Conference House in Tottenville on the Fourth of July, Akosua Afriye Osei-Appaw of Ghana and Mark Kaweesi of Uganda pose with the friendly firefighters of Engine 151 & Ladder 56, from that community.

# “The tour of Richmond Town was closest to my hut.”

*Butholezwe Kgosi Nyathi of Zimbabwe, using an African expression*

## Islanders welcome African visitors

### AFRICAN

FROM A11

Richmond Town, followed by a tour of the historic village, was a highlight of Nyathi's Staten Island stay.

“The tour of Richmond Town was closest to my hut,” Nyathi said, using an African expression.

“The operations and activities there have a strong resemblance to those of my cultural center. I was exposed to traditional American art and culture and was inspired to keep doing the cultural heritage preservation work that I do in Zimbabwe.”

Wiseman took away insights from the meeting as well.

“His very perceptive thoughts helped me frame our institution in a way I never imagined. It was a gift hearing from him and seeing through his eyes,” Wiseman said.

Nyathi was joined by another fellow, Juby Peacock of Botswana, for a visit to the Staten Island Museum, on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden in Livingston, where they met with executive director Cheryl Adolph and her senior staff to discuss marketing, public relations and fundraising strategies.

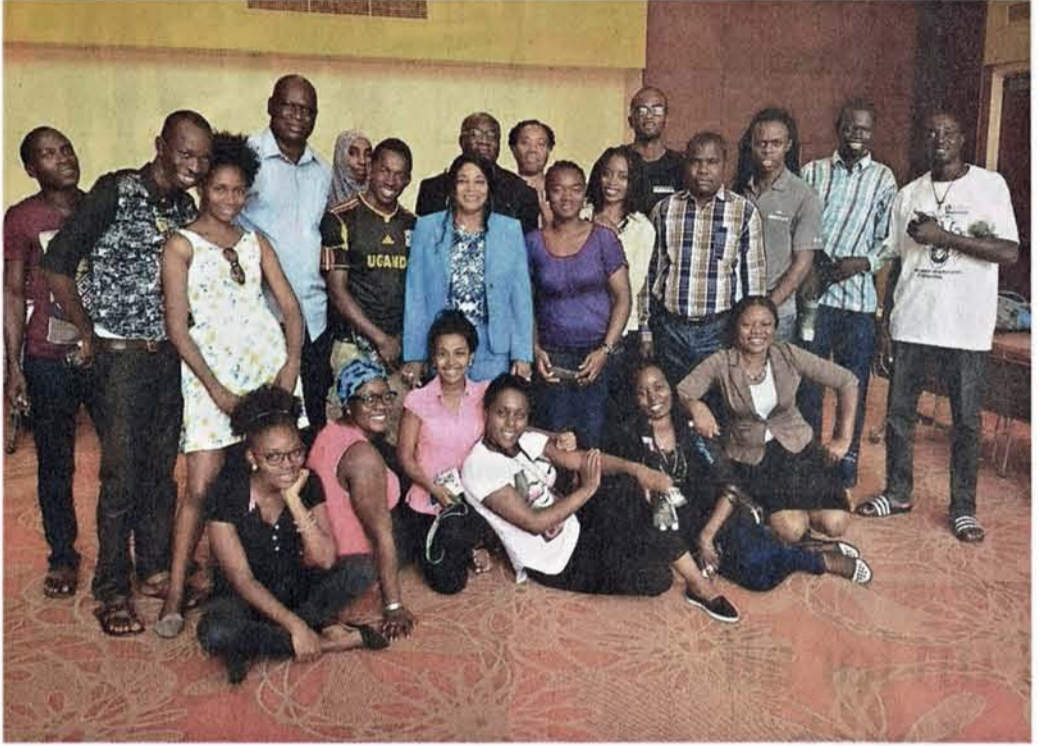
### GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Akosua Afriyie Osei-Appaw of Ghana and Abdul Karim Kabia of Sierra Leone volunteered their time on a Sunday afternoon to sort donated clothing and serve dinner at the Assumption Church soup kitchen in New Brighton.

The Rev. Terry Troia, executive director of Project Hospitality, which runs the program, stopped by to thank them.

Osei-Appaw joined Mark Kaweesi of Uganda for an outdoor reading of the Declaration of Independence led by Beth Gorrie, executive director of Staten Island OutLOUD, on the Fourth of July at historic Fort Wadsworth.

On the Wagner campus, guest speakers included directors from The New York Foundling, Samaritan Daytop Village treatment center, IlluminArt Produc-



**Dr. Phyllis Cureton, in blue suit at center, poses with her staff members and fellows in the Young African Leaders Initiative after a presentation at Wagner College about Samaritan Daytop Village, the Mariners Harbor treatment facility she runs.**  
*Photos by Claire Regan for the Staten Island Advance*

tions and Camp Good Grief for grieving children and teens. Rep. Dan Donovan also gave a presentation to the YALI fellows.

There were dozens of trips into Manhattan for visits to foundations and tourist destinations, and an excursion to Toms River, N.J., to learn about the Oceans of Love non-profit organization dedicated to helping children with cancer.

But it was the everyday Staten Island experiences that made lasting impressions on many of the African visitors: A smoothie and a Whopper Junior from the Burger King in Meiers Corners, a shopping excursion to T.J. Maxx in New Dorp, a stroll along the South Beach boardwalk, a haircut at a local barbershop in Park Hill.

“My favorite spot on Staten Island is the barbershop down the hill [from Wagner],” confided Butholezwe Kgosi Nyathi. “Strange, I know, but I had two of the most pleasant haircut experiences in my 30 years of life on Mother Earth!”

This week, as their fellowships come to an end, the Wagner College cohort joins the 975 other YALI fellows in Washington, D.C., for a three-day summit that culminates with a town hall meeting led by President Barack Obama.



**Juby Kgomotso Peacock of Botswana, left, and Butholezwe Kgosi Nyathi of Zimbabwe join Cheryl Adolph, executive director of the Staten Island Museum, outside the facility on the grounds of the Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden in Livingston.**



**African fellows gather with Ed Wiseman, executive director of Historic Richmond Town, to learn about fundraising, marketing and audience development.**