

Mentor helps Durham locals get into workforce

Brenner works with Partners for Youth Opportunity and StepUp Ministry helping to create resumes, set up interviews and mentoring people toward

By Mckenna Lea
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Happy, kind and generous are all words that can be used to describe Dan Brenner. The depths of these qualities are exemplified in the work he does across the Durham community.

In his retirement, Brenner volunteers with both Partners for Youth Opportunity and StepUp Ministry in Durham, helping those in need to get back on their feet.

"If you're in the position to give back to the community, I think it's the most valuable thing that you can do," he said. "Not only for the community, but for yourself."

Brenner works with both the youth that are assisted by the PYO and the adults who attend StepUp, specializing in job placement and workforce development.

"I've sat down with a lot of people working on their resumes," he said. "Ones that haven't finished high school or have been incarcerated for four or five years."

He meets with community members and takes steps to build their resumes and improve their chances at getting employed. He also helps ensure that younger students continue down the path to success and pursue their passions.

Brenner moved to North Carolina from New York two years ago to be closer to



Brenner also provides guidance for younger students, such as 17-year-old Alex Trejo. (photo by Mckenna Lea)



After just two years in North Carolina, Brenner has already had a positive impact on the community, helping to place over 60 people in employment in 2016. (photo by Mckenna Lea)

his children and their families. However, his move didn't mean he lost his need to strengthen and be present in his own community.

"They helped in every way possible to help me reach my potential, including setting me up with a mentor."

Alex Trejo, PYO mentee

In New York, Brenner was able to coordinate training programs for high school students, placing them in workplaces that were related to their studies. He also worked summer youth employment so he was already experienced in helping with workforce development.

His past experience and passion was met with open arms by StepUp. In what seemed like a natural move, StepUp later introduced Brenner to PYO, allowing him to continue his work helping youth.

"PYO is a fabulous program," he said. "That is why I was so anxious to work with them."

His work with the PYO has already al-

lowed him to help coordinate student trips to businesses and mentor youth on their future job prospects.

"They were really supportive of whatever I was trying to do," 17-year-old PYO mentee, Alex Trejo said. "They helped in every way possible to help me reach my potential, including setting me up with a mentor."

Tim Wollin, the employment director at StepUp, sees Brenner's hard work and dedication every day.

"Dan has been incredibly selfless and giving to StepUp and the participants we serve," he said. "Dan's experience in business, program creation and client serving have made him a hugely valuable asset. StepUp would not have placed over 60 people in employment in 2016 if it were not for Dan's hard work."

Some of Brenner's efforts at StepUp have included crafting participant resumes, facilitating interviews and providing his guidance wherever sought.

Brenner's understanding of the importance of giving back and his drive to help others is one that not even Brenner himself could see stopping any time soon.

"I get so much out of it," he said. "People do this because there is such a need for it. Some people say 'If I can do it anyone can' but that's not the case and some of us just need a helping hand."