



Green City Force helps one young man find a path in life with a career at OnForce Solar



Miguel Rodriguez. Credit: GRID Alternatives and Green City Force

Miguel Rodriguez was ready for a change. He grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in an apartment with his single mother and extended family. He often helped to support them by babysitting the smaller children in the household and working at a retail pharmacy to bring in some extra income.

At 21 years old, Miguel knew that he was capable of more but didn't have a clear vision for his future. In the fall of 2013, Miguel was referred to Green City Force, an AmeriCorps program that helps disadvantaged young people to train for careers in the clean energy field, providing a monthly stipend and MetroCard for public transit to program participants. The program is supported, in part, by NYSERDA's Workforce Development initiative, which sponsors training partners who can demonstrate relationships with employers in the industry that provide internship opportunities.

Exceeding expectations

From February to July 2014, Miguel excelled in his coursework at Green City Force. His instructors were impressed with his passion and his work ethic. He received college-level academic instruction in building science that was paired with hands-on learning experiences and resulted in a nationally recognized certification.

He was selected to participate in a service internship and was placed with GRID Alternatives, a nonprofit solar electric installer. Miguel completed over 1,300 service

"I learned building science and earned a national certification. Green City Force made me see that I am a part of the solution. That changed my life. I found my passion: renewable energy."

— Miguel Rodriguez, OnForce Solar



(From left) Tonya Gayle, director of development for Green City Force, Miguel Rodriguez, and Lisbeth Shepherd, executive director of Green City Force. Credit: GRID Alternatives and Green City Force

hours—400 hours more than the required minimum under the AmeriCorps program and the most of any young person in his cohort—while enrolled in the Green City Force program.

Award-winning work

On November 6, 2014, Miguel joined Green City Force’s Executive Director Lisbeth Shepherd in accepting a 2014 Advocate Award from Environmental Advocates of New York on behalf of the organization. Miguel was asked to deliver the acceptance speech, in which he noted that the training opportunity with Green City Force changed his life. He described developing skill sets and a professional work ethic and becoming “part of the solution.” He said, “Working together, we can achieve a clean energy future in which everyone has a part and everyone can prosper.”

Because of his training and internship experience, Miguel is now employed full-time as a solar electric installer with OnForce Solar in the Bronx. His experiences over the past year have helped him to recognize that life is not a straight path—it is a series of endeavors that culminate in success. Miguel hopes to continue his education and to one day start his own business or work in environmental policy.

Get started

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