



Jessica Bynoe, PENCIL's Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer

Lisa Belzberg founded PENCIL in 1995 as she embarked on a project to invite executives and other leaders of industry to serve as principals for a day in New York City and realize the opportunity and responsibility businesses have to support public education.

The nonprofit organization, since the start, has played a critical role in bringing together business professionals, educators, and students to open eyes, minds and doors. As it celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, PENCIL now manages programs that work with nearly 8,000 students and more than 300 businesses a year.

We recently discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the organization, its mission, and more with Jessica Bynoe, PENCIL's Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, and board member Lewis M. Warren Jr., a Long Island resident who is also Managing Director and National Industry Executive of Government Banking in the commercial banking division at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Q: What is the mission of PENCIL?

JB: Our mission is to connect students to success and we do that by bringing the business community together with public school students in New York City and getting young people access to relationships, skills and opportunities.

Q: What makes PENCIL unique?

LW: At JPMorgan, we sponsor several programs with different schools that PENCIL is partnered with to provide

hands-on mentoring, coaching, connecting young public school kids to the outside world – be it the corporate world, be it the accountancy world, law firms. All of the partner organizations at PENCIL do this and that's what makes PENCIL distinctive to me. That hands-on ability to help students through mentorships, training opportunities, immersive opportunities.

Q: Are you doing anything special to mark PENCIL's 25th anniversary?

JB: We aren't going to host an in-person gala like we originally planned this year. But we are launching a campaign called "50,000 Futures" to celebrate PENCIL's stories of success and raise the resources necessary to ensure even more young people get these kinds of opportunities.

Q: How has COVID-19 impacted your organization?

JB: Within two weeks of us being remote, we were implementing programming for students across New York City. While the virtual world has presented some challenges, and it might have been a little bit of a bumpy takeoff, we got up in the air faster than a lot of other nonprofits in the city and we've been able to serve over a thousand students since April 1.

Q: What are the biggest challenges facing your organization?

JB: In an environment particularly like this, there's a lot of uncertainty around funding, staying relevant, and making sure you can tell your story. It can be challenging to share the success of one organization in a tristate area where there are 12 million people vying for airtime and attention.

Q: What role is technology playing now at your organization and in the sector?

LW: What Jessica and the entire PENCIL team is delivering today in terms of content and programming is all virtual. Technology is super important.



Lewis M. Warren Jr., board member and Managing Director and National Industry Executive of Government Banking at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

JB: I think the disparity in access to technology has been highlighted right now in this environment and, as a result, you're seeing literally hundreds of thousands of young people not being able to show up in the same way to be educated and take advantage of opportunity.

Q: Are there new initiatives or programs at your organization that you can tell us about?

JB: This year, we started a partnership with RXR Realty. It has been delayed due to COVID-19 and everything going on, but RXR did become a new supporter of our Internship Program allowing us to begin supporting high school students in Nassau County and New Rochelle. We are focusing on Uniondale in Nassau County to provide high school with pre-career training and then be eligible to get a paid internship in 2021 with RXR at in Uniondale or in Manhattan. Students will get real world experience and learn the industry of real estate development and property management.



Lewis Warren with the young students in his JP Morgan Chase's Pencil School Partnership Program

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