
EXPLAINERS: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Preeti Gupta, VP of Education



The Hall's *Science Career Ladder* is a nationally replicated education program that creates a pathway into the sciences and education for women and minorities. High school and college students climb the "Ladder" by working as paid, part-time exhibit "Explainers." Since 1986, the program has inspired over 1,700 students to pursue professional careers, many in science and education.

Under the leadership of Vice-President of Education Preeti Gupta, the Explainer corps has, in the past three years, expanded by 50%. In her journey from Explainer (in 1989) to instructor to head of the largest department in the institution, Preeti has personified how a science center can galvanize curiosity, learning, and accomplishment. Annually, 150 students now strengthen their communication skills, learn inquiry-based teaching techniques, develop self-confidence, and seek degrees in education, science, medicine, and technology. Many participants have drawn inspiration from Preeti's example; many are now serving as examples for the next generation.

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Jennifer Correa, Manager of Explainers



In the fall of 1997, Jennifer was beginning her third year of high school when she learned she was pregnant. “Although almost everyone thought my life was over, thought that I would end up as just another high school dropout living off welfare – I wasn’t going to let that happen to me.” Throughout her pregnancy Jennifer attended high school every day, working hard to finish a year ahead and keep a hold on the reins of her life.

On May 1, 1998, her baby boy Joel was born. “I was determined not to let him down,” she says. Three weeks after Joel's birth, Jennifer returned to school from maternity leave. Three weeks later, she graduated first in her class, a year ahead of schedule. And three days after graduation, Jennifer was invited to join the Hall’s *Science Career Ladder* as an intern.

Jennifer has worked at the Hall ever since, earning her B.A at Queens College along the way. Her enthusiasm, dedication, and charisma have rapidly propelled her up the rungs of the *Science Career Ladder*; today, she oversees the entire Explainer program and its 150 participants. Without the Hall, without her will to succeed, Jennifer might have ended up where everyone thought she would: at the bottom. Instead, she’s never been higher.

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Ravi Baldeo, Senior explainer



“I never saw college in my future - I’d always felt it was a waste of time,” Ravi admits. “I thought I could get by without it, like my parents did.”

But at fourteen, Ravi entered the *Science Career Ladder* and everything changed. Daily he worked with college students who “Explained” not only the importance of college but also the steps to take to get there. Older Explainers taught him about the

repercussions of the negative choices (drugs, violence, other mischief) he faced in school. Ravi especially remembers a supervisor who always took time out to correct his “street vernacular.” “He told me that speaking poorly only made me seem ignorant -- and that is one thing I am not.”

“At the Hall, I learned about the importance of education, built permanent relationships, and was molded into a professional individual. I will forever be thankful for the friendship and guidance I found there.”

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Brian Estevez, Explainer



When his parents divorced, Brian's mother was left with the burden of handling the housework and paying the bills. He and his brother had to look for work as soon as they could. A close friend recommended the Hall's *Science Career Ladder* program to Brian. "If I didn't work as an Explainer, I would not be as focused as I am in school or have any experience in science education," Brian says. "I wouldn't even be able to attend college full-time."

Being an Explainer has had a great impact on Brian's life: he has not only met some of the "most intelligent and kind people in New York" but he has also improved his public speaking skills. Brian is currently enrolled in Queensborough Community College, in hopes of one day becoming a science teacher. "This is why the Explainer program is necessary: to help those like me achieve their dreams."