



# The Builders of the New World Program

## A Theatre and Education Program for Homeless Children

Thurman E. Scott, Artistic Director, Executive Producer and Founder

[www.actorsTheatreWorkshop.com](http://www.actorsTheatreWorkshop.com)

*“Sometimes life can be dark and negative, but that is only short term.  
Real life is about light, positivity, and love. Most of all, you need to  
love and respect yourself.”*

*Ashley Rivera, Age 10*

*Builders of the New World Graduate*



## ★ The Actors Theatre Workshop (ATW): A Theatre Committed to Community

ATW was founded in 1990 by Thurman E. Scott, an award-winning actor, writer, and director committed to community action and social change. Deemed a “creative revolutionary” by his mentor, Stella Adler, Mr. Scott has established ATW as a pioneer in non-profit theatre that helps individuals to develop their potential and provides them with the tools to change through studying original theatre and education techniques, produces classical and contemporary plays and develops new dramatic works that examine the social issues of the day.

## ★★ Builders of the New World (BNW): A Program that Works

BNW is a groundbreaking theatre and education program that has been providing homeless children and at-risk youth with the tools they need to succeed in today’s society since 1995. Using a unique approach to education, BNW endows its young members with the power to change their lives. Original creative techniques help the children imagine worlds of their own creation, worlds in which they are able to solve today’s problems with new and imaginative solutions. With an improved self-image and a renewed hope for the future, the children approach learning with unparalleled excitement and commitment. By the program’s end, the children have not only developed an understanding that they must educate themselves today to achieve their goals for the future, they’ve strengthened their presence, improved their reading, writing and presentation skills, and developed the critical values of discipline and personal responsibility they will need to achieve their dreams for the future.



BNW was created as part of an initiative of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The Board of Education, and the Department of Homeless Services to provide an enriching cultural experience for homeless children. Putting his passion for theatre and understanding of humanity to work, ATW’s Artistic Director, Thurman E. Scott, designed a program to address the social and personal challenges faced by children living in transitional housing facilities. His success is undeniable.



**Over the past twenty years, BNW has transformed the lives of thousands of children and their families. Here's just some of the proof:**

- After witnessing the powerful effects BNW had on its participants, the Harriet Tubman housing facility, the first to work with ATW, requested that they continue their involvement with the program because they had seen such dramatic improvement in the children's grades and social skills.
- Community School Board 5 in Central Harlem funded BNW for three years after the DCA budget for the overall initiative was cut in 1999, because they had seen great scholastic improvement in the homeless children's schoolwork since participating in the program.
- Administrators from **Volunteers of America** and **Women in Need** report that the young program graduates strengthened their reading ability, consistently improved their grades, exercised greater self-discipline, became less prone to fighting, and strengthened their commitment to community involvement.
- BNW has won numerous awards for artistic and educational excellence, including the prestigious Encore Award from the Arts and Business Council, and has received enormous support from community members such as former **Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields** and **Congressman Charles B. Rangel**.



## ★ **BNW Structure: The Foundation of Success**

**Mentors and Program Assistants:** Business professionals from leading corporations and theatre artists join together to provide guidance and support to the children in the program. To become a Mentor and Program Assistant, these members of the community must complete an intensive application process. Upon being selected, each member will receive an in-depth training with ATW's Artistic Director and Founder, Thurman E. Scott.

**Breaking Through Barriers:** Each BNW program session begins with hot, nutritious meals donated by leading New York City restaurants. Children and mentors share a meal together, which creates a relaxed family style gathering.

**Learning the Rules:** A lot is expected of the young Builders of the New World. In order for the children to excel in all areas of the program, a caring and safe environment must first be established. BNW therefore places great emphasis on discipline, teamwork and respect in order to create an environment that supports success and allows the creative process to unfold.



**Looking into the Future:** Under Mr. Scott's teaching and guidance, the children learn techniques to open up their imaginations. They begin to explore the endless possibilities of their open minds; creating new worlds of the future in which they see themselves participating in the community with a feeling of ownership and contribution. With these visions of future fulfillment flourishing in their minds, the children begin to respect that the choices they make today will lead to their successes tomorrow.

**Exploring Issues:** Using their new worlds as testing grounds for redefined social orders, the children experiment with solutions to social problems such as discrimination and violence which have plagued human existence since the beginning of time.

**Strengthening Reading, Writing and Presentation Skills:** Our ideas are only as powerful as our ability to communicate them to others. With Mr. Scott's guidance and support from the mentors, the children continue to develop their visions for the future into stories and drawings that they will present at their final performance. Mr. Scott teaches the children to improve their vocal projection, posture, and overall stage presence. Being directed by a theatre artist of Mr. Scott's magnitude is a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the children.

**Participating in Society's Institutions:** To change something you first need to understand how it works. An important component of the BNW program is to teach the children the basic structure of our country's political and economic systems. The children elect representatives to present their proposals to their own city council and learn the importance of community organizing to obtain the services they need. They write funding proposals for their ideas, learning what is required for their dreams to become reality.

**Life Skills:** Adolescence intensifies the challenges the young people face, such as drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancy, and discrimination. BNW prepares the children to overcome these challenges by teaching them the pitfalls of every-day life, helping them to build awareness and develop an intention in life, and nurturing them with strong ideals and loving discipline.

**Children's Performance:** At the conclusion of each program session, the children present their creations to an audience of their peers, mentors, family, and members of community that include elected government officials. This final performance provides the children with the unforgettable experience of receiving the love, support, and validation of the community. At one performance, the children were honored to have Congressman Charles B. Rangel in the audience. In response to the children's presentations Congressman Rangel declared

*"My political and social consciousness is always recharged when I see lovely kids, whose minds are just beginning to develop, being exposed to all the things God would want them to have, and people who care enough to be with them... Thank you, Mr. Scott. To be able to be so creative, to bring all of the genius and the beauty that's in these children and develop it so that they can share it with us, all I can say is that makes me a very, very happy human being."*

**Program Graduates:** Many BNW graduates have gone on to fulfill their visions for the future. We have welcomed some of these young men and women back to our theatre to learn more about their lives after BNW. They told us that the skills they gained in the program had greatly contributed to their life's accomplishments. They now hold powerful positions in corporate America, are starting their own businesses, and have won numerous citations as teachers, writers and policemen. The ideals and visions they developed in The Builders of the New World Program have stayed with them, fueling their commitment to make this world a better place in which to live.



**The Builders of the New World Program unites men, women, and children from all walks of life under a moving vision of hope for the future. Through its bold approach to education it strengthens our communities and empowers our children to aggressively pursue reading, writing, and community building skills today so they can achieve their powerful visions of tomorrow.**



***“We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity.***

***I still have a dream today...”***

***- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963***