

## **THIS IS ONEIDA 2014 GRADUATE TELLS HER ONEIDA EXPERIENCE**

*For the next two weeks I will be running Oneida experiences as told by some of our 2014 graduates. This week's article features a young lady from New York who attended OBI for five years.*

I didn't know I was coming to O.B.I. until the day before I left my house to come. That is one of the saddest days of my life. The main obstacles I had to overcome when I got to Oneida were my poor hygiene and my bashfulness toward people. I was always the outcast of everything until I came to Oneida, which helped me interact with people and make new friends. It's been five years, but I chose to stay and graduate because I knew this is where I had to be. O.B.I. offered me the opportunity to meet people from all over the world and unforgettable friendships I've made. When I first enrolled, I was just mainly looking for a new group of friends I could make. I also got involved in activities I thought I'd never do.

Here at Oneida I started getting involved in sports, which was a huge step for me. I had fun with them and my teammates. I have worked every job on campus except for the farm, but the one I enjoyed the most was being the second floor hall monitor. A lot of girls used to talk to me about all kinds of things when I came to their room at night and I loved the fact that they respected me. I learned how to be a good role model to the younger ones and how to be a good listener. Chapel has taught me so many good Christian worship songs that I'll never forget. The very first song I fell in love with in 2009 was "He Loves Us." That song gets to me every time, and Oneida has helped my spiritual growth.

There are countless lessons I had to learn at O.B.I. I had to learn how to be independent and to take certain responsibilities at a very young age, and that was very hard for me. I learned that there's not always someone that is going to be there. No matter what I went through at Oneida, I learned to keep my head up and move forward, because everything happens for a reason. Coming here, I've gained knowledge on life itself and how it can just change up on you. I gained self-control and the ability to make someone else smile even when I'm down myself. I hope to continue that after I graduate as well.

I plan to go to Union College in the fall. I would like to be a future high school counselor if that's what God has planned for me, because I've decided to let Him lead the way from here on out. A part of me actually feels as if I'm ready for my future role in society. I'm ready to see what God is going to do with me and how He's going to use me to touch people. I would like to help impact someone's life in the way Oneida has impacted mine for the better. When I graduate, Oneida will be nothing but a great memory of when my life changed from the moment I got there.



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