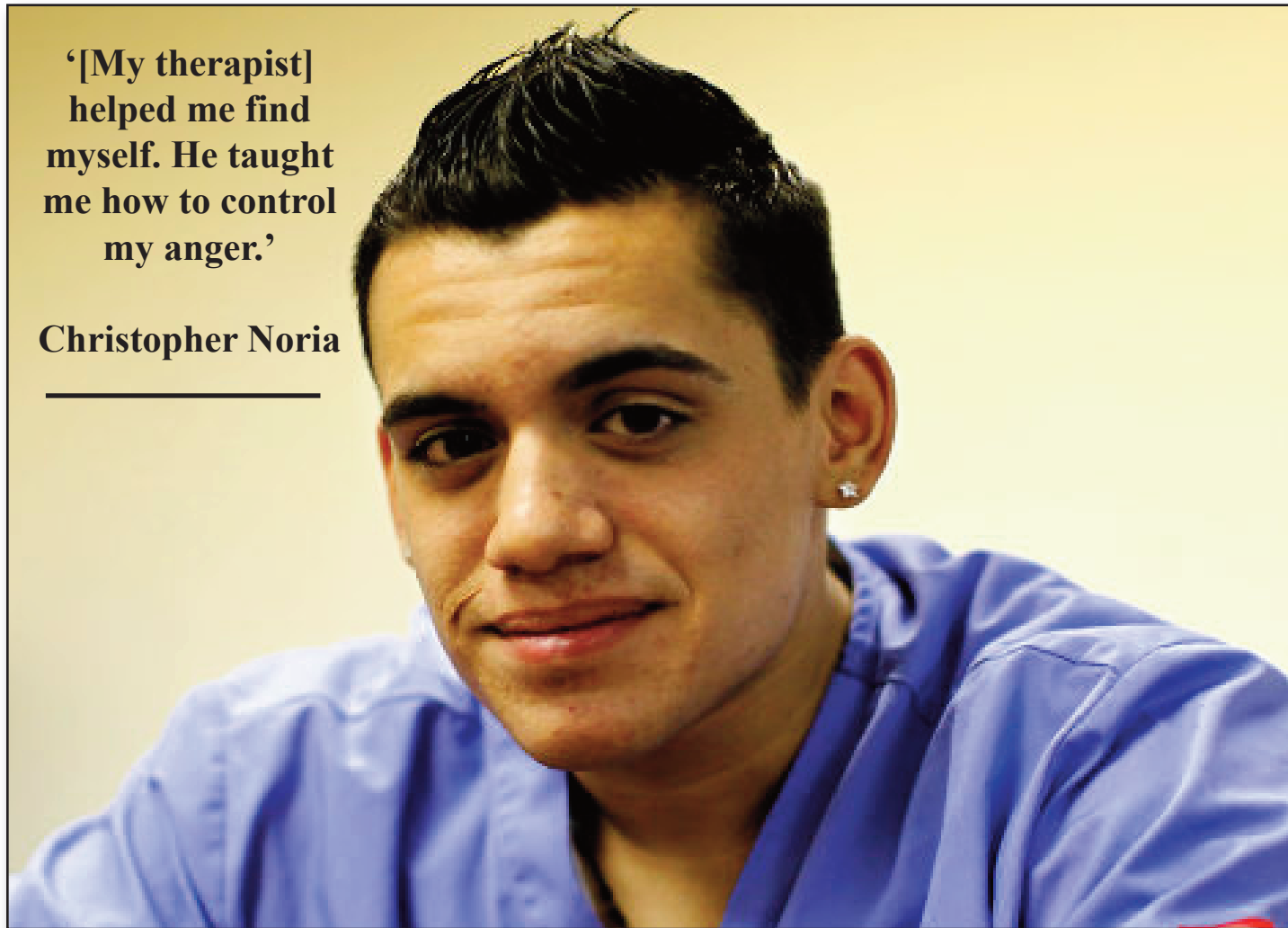


# Juvenile Justice Initiative program helps Queens teen Christopher Noria turn life around



**'[My therapist] helped me find myself. He taught me how to control my anger.'**

**Christopher Noria**

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Christopher Noria, 19, says he has greater purpose in life thanks to Juvenile Justice Initiative. Photo by Jeanne Noonan

## After 'horrible' time at center he turned troubled life around

**BY MATTHEW BULTMAN  
and SAMUEL GOLDSMITH**  
DAILY NEW WRITERS

Christopher Noria says he has greater purpose in life thanks to Juvenile Justice Initiative program.

Christopher Noria found himself in a juvenile detention center for two months after two arrests for assault when he was 16.

"People were intimidated by me," said Noria, now 19, of Queens. "I was the bad boy of the neighborhood, and I enjoyed that."

Noria said he fought classmates and strangers every week starting at age 10. He dropped out of Flushing High School in 2007, right around the time of his first arrest.

"He looked at me the wrong way," Noria said of his victim. "Back then, that was reason enough for me to fight somebody."

When he was busted for assaulting

a young man he accused of stealing his cell phone, Noria spent two weeks in the old Spofford Juvenile Detention Center in the Bronx followed by six weeks at a group home in Brooklyn. Mayor Bloomberg will unveil plans to take over the city's juvenile justice system Tuesday.

"Those two months were horrible," he said. "Not because of the people inside, but because I couldn't be with my family."

"Some people liked being incarcerated. It has become a way of life for them."

"... Me, I don't see myself progressing while I'm in there. I was the same person as I was on the streets."

When he got out, Noria was ordered to attend the Juvenile Justice Initiative program at the Child Center of New York in Jamaica, a program lauded by the city for helping troubled youth change their lives.

There he met Eddy Lee, a thera-

pist who spent six months leading family therapy with Noria and his parents.

They met at the family's home three times a week for an hour at a time.

If Noria or his parents missed a session, he could be sent back to jail for 18 months.

"The therapy didn't focus on just me," Noria said. "It helped my entire family communicate better."

"Eddy helped me find myself. He taught me how to control my anger and live in society. It changed my whole life. It made me a better person and gave me a purpose in life."

Noria got his GED and is working toward an associate's degree at Plaza College in Jackson Heights.

He wants to go to medical school and become a cardiologist.

"Eddy and the [Juvenile Justice Initiative] program saved my life," he said. "I owe him everything. I want to be somebody in life."