



Challenge by Choice

The Youth Academy class of 2008 took the Wednesday before Thanksgiving to have a reunion that included a high ropes course. So strong were the bonds and lessons of their adventure challenges at the Chewonki Foundation (the last of which was three and a half years ago) that these college sophomores chose to use one of their days back home to challenge themselves in the outdoors once again. These alumni could have easily chosen to get together to relax, but instead chose to reconnect with problem-solving while elevated off the ground. All of these young adults, not coincidentally I think, remain on track to earn their degree.

An Internship Year alumna, now in her senior year of college, arrived four years ago as a semester student facing the daunting weeklong Outward Bound winter course. She was a self-described naturephobe, telling her peers the night before departure that she was terrified and unsure if she could survive the trip. Six days later her instructors described her as the group's backbone, and her face beamed with pride at her accomplishment. In her junior year of college, she chose to go abroad to Australia where she intentionally encountered more nature than Maine could give a person in a year. She chose to push herself, to "do the thing you think you cannot do" (to paraphrase Eleanor Roosevelt). When people ask her if Australia is the most amazing thing she has ever done, she answers, "No, it's the most amazing thing I've done since Dynamy."

In the adventure challenge field, there is the concept of *challenge by choice*, which is a simple yet powerful concept that each participant needs to choose to participate in each challenge or activity and their decision respected by the group. When I see how many alumni lead lives where they continue to choose to be challenged and value that challenge, I can't help but think of another phrase that educators have used for decades, that of the *lifelong learner*. Most educational settings refer to the development of lifelong learners as a primary goal; when I see how so many of our former students pursue challenge in life I am certain that we do exactly that. Not only do the choices and awareness of these alumni affirm Dynamy's experiential approach, they also remind me of a core reason *why* this approach is so powerful for young people.

Regards,

Fred Kaelin
Executive Director

Paying It Forward

Pete Wilson remembers with clarity the impact that his internship sponsors had on him when he was a Dynamy Internship Year intern in 1994. In fact, his relationship with his final sponsor that year was so good that Pete was offered a job there. Immediately after completing Dynamy, Pete started working at Worcester Publishing, where he was employed in the Information Technology (IT) department until just last year.



Within a couple of years after being hired at Worcester Publishing (which published Worcester Magazine and Worcester Business Journal until last year), Pete started asking his employer about taking on a Dynamy intern. He began to realize the value of his own Dynamy experience, and decided that he wanted to "pay it forward".

Since those early days, Pete estimates that he has had between 15 – 20 Dynamy interns. Last year, he left Worcester Publishing and took a position at Foresite—an outsource technology firm that specializes in technology management, website design and application development. He is still based in Worcester, and still taking interns from Dynamy. This fall, Joey Maccini from Wayland, MA is working with him.

Some of Pete's heartfelt reflections about being a Dynamy sponsor:

"As I started to get my sea legs, and started to live the lessons I learned at Dynamy... I discovered my talents and strengths. Without Dynamy, I might have spent the rest of my life trying to figure that out."

"Young people can be so lost. They don't get the opportunities to explore their interests. I get fulfillment out of sharing the success of someone who is trying to figure things out. They come in wanting job experience—but what they get is life experience."

"People did this for me. In doing their jobs and living their lives, they made the choice to give something of themselves to me. That was a wonderful thing for me, and I love every moment of doing it for the next generation. I can relate. I was there."

We thank Pete for his many years of mentoring Dynamy interns; and for his dedication and commitment to helping young people who are exploring their abilities in work and in life!



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Dynamy's mission is to challenge, support, and empower young people to discover their purpose in life and to practice their values.

Thank you to everyone who has given a gift to this year's Dynamy Fund. Every gift helps us to continue to offer the high quality programs that help so many teens and young adults make the transition to successful adulthood!

Fred Kaelin
Executive Director

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Have you thought about remembering Dynamy in your will?

Call Jan Curley in the Development Office
at 508-755-2571 x16 for help or information



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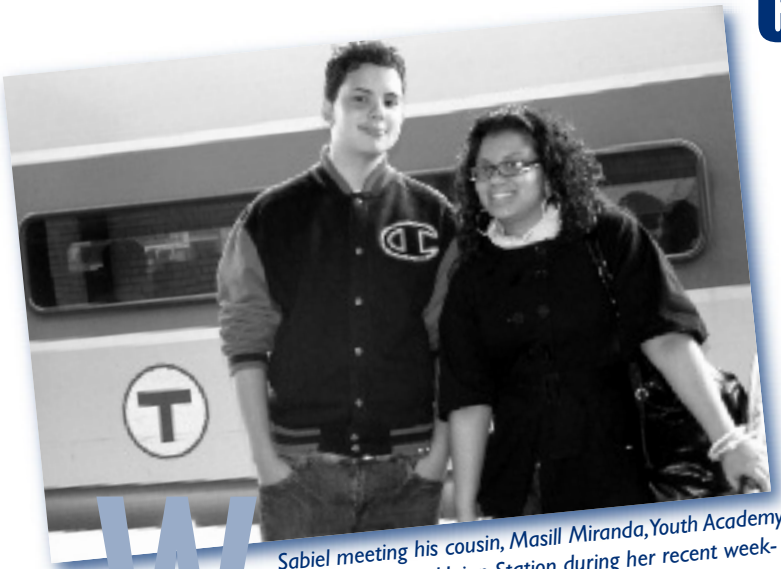
PAYING IT FORWARD
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INTERNSHIP YEAR ■ YOUTH ACADEMY

Dynami

EXPLORE. REFLECT. ACT. WINTER 2009

Changing Family Systems— Creating Social Change



When our Youth Academy students arrive the summer between eighth and ninth grade, they have some idea that the program could change their lives; what they don't know is how much the program will change the lives of their families.

Sabiel meeting his cousin, Masill Miranda, Youth Academy class of 2008, at Union Station during her recent weekend home from Wheelock College

"I have always heard about Dynami from the time that my cousin, Masill, was part of the program. She always said great things about the program, and thanks to Dynami she was given the opportunity to go to college and become the person she is today. I remember my mother always telling me to follow in her footsteps because she was the only one in the family working for a better future and the first to go to college in our whole family. So when Dynami came to my school, East Middle, I knew that I had to apply so I could do the same."

Sabiel Rodriguez

Here is just a sampling of activities in which program advisors might find themselves involved:

- ◆ Participating in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting at a student's school;
- ◆ Home visit with all significant adults and siblings in the student's life;
- ◆ Frequent contact with parents via e-mail;
- ◆ Family potlucks at Dynami, which include presentations on parental support;
- ◆ Creation of a parent network;
- ◆ Attendance at sports activities and academic award ceremonies, especially when parents cannot attend.

The family systems of our students are generally not in great condition, often broken. The lack of stability, the lack of support, and the enmeshed family systems all contribute to students' perceptions that they have little hope of establishing a self-identity or of being able to leave the family to pursue their own dreams and goals.

Raquel Castro, Youth Academy advisor, says, "Our job is to get every adult in every student's life on the same page, as far as their commitment to that student's goals. We have to make sure that parents trust that we are encouraging the right decisions for their child. We have to recruit parents as allies in the long-term goals of college matriculation and graduation for our students, who are, of course, their children. Eventually the intense level of impact seeps into family structures and the family system is altered in a way that benefits everyone in the family."

Family involvement has been integrated into the culture of the program because we know that our students have much greater success when they have the support of their families. One unexpected wonderful result is that there are now secondary beneficiaries of Youth Academy success—younger siblings and cousins of program graduates who are starting to follow in their footsteps. So, we are changing family systems and creating social change, one student at a time.

It's All About Opportunities

Part of Youth Academy's mission is to guide our students to the doors of higher education and beyond. During their high school summers, we encourage students to seek out and participate in leadership opportunities to broaden their horizons and fill out their resumes in preparation for college applications.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Agnes M. Lindsay Trust for their generous grant that was used to help our students pay tuition for some of these programs. Without this, most of our students would not have been able to afford to take part in these wonderful opportunities.

JOELINA DELA CRUZ

Youth Academy class of 2009, South High School
Youth Judicial Corps—Superior Court Probation Office

Joelina was one of 20 Worcester Public School students selected to participate in the Youth Judicial Corps. A competitive process, Joelina first had to be nominated by a teacher and by the school principal, then had to interview at the Superior Court Probation Office.

During this seven week program, Joelina was directly supervised by Jean Curtin, assistant chief probation officer. She became an integral part of the workforce, digging into a wide variety of administrative assistant responsibilities. Her bi-lingual capabilities were called on, and she translated during occasional interviews with probationers. She visited the Worcester Correctional Center for Men, and saw first hand what the inside of a prison is like. She had the opportunity to interface with several judges, and the thrill of meeting the Supreme Court Chief Justice, Margaret Marshall. Joelina says, "This experience taught me that I do not want to go into criminal justice as a career. It was so hard to hear the stories of these people, I definitely do not have the right personality for this type of work. But it did reinforce my sense of responsibility, and gave me confidence in my abilities. *My supervisor, Jean, spent so much time with me, teaching and advising me. She was one of the most influential mentors I have ever had!*"



(l-r) Nugget, Moses and Joelina. Kofi was unavailable for photo.

MOSES ZENON-LAGUERRE

Youth Academy class of 2010, Burncoat High School
ERA Key Realty

Initially lukewarm about the idea of having to wear a tie every day to his internship at ERA Key Realty in Worcester, Moses ended his four week experience saying, *"This was one of the greatest experiences I have ever had, and I really think I would be interested in doing this someday!"* Moses worked with two real estate brokers at ERA Key Realty, Jennifer Solin and Luz Gonzalez, learning every aspect of the business. From showing properties to going on home inspections to learning about every step in buying or selling a home, Moses was exposed to the day to day work of the real estate business. He also was assigned special projects, got to sit in on a first time home buyers class that one of his supervisors taught, and learned about the role of a loan officer. His greatest lessons, he said, however, were in the more personal arena. "I worked with different adults every day, and learned how to act professional in a work setting. I got to work on my communication and social skills, and this experience was a huge boost to my self-confidence."

and help them to open and walk through those doors. Leadership, sports, academic, and enrichment programs

KOFI DORMAH

Youth Academy class of 2009, Doherty High School
Rutgers and Northeastern Universities' Summer Football Camp

Kofi, on the football team at Doherty, wanted to find out if he could possibly use his athletic ability to widen his choice of college possibilities. Over the summer, he was invited to attend football camps at Rutgers University in New Jersey and Northeastern University in Boston. Each experience was an opportunity for Kofi to showcase his talents and abilities and to meet a number of football coaches from several colleges and universities who took part in the camps. It was also a wonderful introduction to being part of a college campus and reinforced Kofi's commitment to his dream of attending college. Five out of the seven college coaches who met Kofi are interested in him, which has been a boost to his confidence. He said, *"This experience was so challenging...it tested me and also reminded me of how much I can push myself if I really want to."* One of the coaches told us 'You're not coming to our school to be a football player. You're coming to be a student and play football on the side'. That was the greatest lesson of the summer for me."

NUGGET MEDINA

Youth Academy class of 2009, Doherty High School
University of Findlay Forensic Science Camp

Always interested in science and a huge fan of the television show CSI, when Nugget's mom found a forensic science camp at the University of Findlay in Ohio, Nugget jumped at it. In order to be accepted into CSI Findlay, she had to provide a reference from her physics teacher and her school transcript. At the camp, she met 24 other students from across the country who shared her love of forensic science. The one week immersion program consisted of a combination of lectures, hands-on learning, projects and presentations. The curriculum included topics such as DNA matching, fingerprinting, cadaver dissection, crime scene evidence and solving cases. This was Nugget's first experience on a college campus, and spending a week living in a college dorm on campus was thrilling for her. She is now thinking of applying to the University of Findlay, one of the few schools in the country with an undergraduate forensic science major. Nugget said of this experience, *"This week was one of the best of my whole life. It reinforced my career goals, showed me what my future can be, and made college seem real, like it could actually happen for me."*



One of our animal care internship sites, located in Stow, Massachusetts, Eye of the Storm is an equine rescue center dedicated to saving the lives of horses who have been abused, neglected or abandoned. The farm was founded by Nina Arbella (pictured with class of 2009 Dynamy interns Nunzio Cimino, Rachel Miller, and Aaron Goldberg). Nina and a small group of volunteers now devote many hours each day to caring for horses rescued from abandonment, abuse or a miserable trip to the slaughterhouse.

Superintendent's Advisory Council Well Represented by Youth Academy



"It is an honor and a privilege to be chosen to represent your peers."

Marianne Amonoo-Afari

"This experience has increased my confidence and given me opportunities to practice my public speaking skills."

Bedward Ortiz

We Salute Our Fall 2009 Sponsors

Without our 170 – 180 internship sponsors, there would be no Dynamy Internship Year. For almost 40 years, individuals from every nook and cranny of the central Massachusetts world of work have been willing to mentor our interns, and provide them with the real life work experience that is central to the program.

Internship opportunities exist in a wide variety of workplaces: creative areas encompassing everything from weaving and glassblowing to photography and graphic design; media outlets such as local television, radio, and newspapers; museums; animal care; theater; all kinds of small businesses; culinary arts; childcare and education; human services; the environment; finance; government/civic; health care; and off-the-beaten-path opportunities such as a rock climbing gym.

When an intern arrives at Dynamy expressing interest in a career area not available, our program staff attempt to fill that void. This semester, we have six new internships*, based on student requests.

This fall, there are interns placed in the following organizations and companies, which is a sampling of all the internships we are fortunate to be able to offer our students:

American Civil Liberties Union
Worcester Telegram & Gazette
Rape Crisis Center
Greater Worcester Land Trust
Eric's LaPatisserie Café
Higgins Armory Museum
Ritmos Dance Academy*
Bicycle Alley

Environmental League of MA*
Flagg Street School
Worcester Think Tank
Community Realty*
Worcester Youth Center
Davis Publications*
Struck Catering
Foresite Technology
Boys and Girls Club
Central MA Rock Climbing Gym*
MassAudubon Broad Meadow Brook
WCRN
Higgins Armory Museum
WCCA
Flagg Street Elementary School
Center for Women and Enterprise*
YWCA of Central MA
Boys and Girls Club

Council Academy Students

Edward Ortiz and Marianne Amonoo-Afari, Youth Academy and Doherty High School students, were among the five students selected from their school this year to represent the student body in the Superintendent's Advisory Council. The Council's mission is to give students a voice in the issues that are important to them throughout Worcester's Public High Schools. Recent meeting topics have included healthy food options in the schools and choices of textbooks. Dr. Melinda Boone, Superintendent of Schools, as well as selected members of her senior management team, meet with the Council monthly to discuss students' ideas, concerns, and priorities.

A Family Tradition of Giving

As I sat in Howard Peterson, Jr.'s office at Peterson Oil for this interview, he took me back to 1946, the year that his father, Howard Peterson, Sr., started the company with one fuel truck. He explained that his father, a high school graduate, had believed in both kinds of education—the classroom kind and the “school of hard Knox” kind.

Fast forward to the early 1970's when Peterson Oil had become a thriving business in the Worcester landscape and Dynamy was a fledgling experiential education organization. Dynamy's mission resonated with Howard Sr., and he became an avid financial supporter for many years, until he passed away in 2002.

When Howard, Jr. inherited the reins of his father's company, he was already involved in the central Massachusetts non-profit community. As an active volunteer at organizations such as Worcester Academy and Tower Hill Botanical Gardens, Howard used his extensive background in accounting to help these institutions balance their budgets and complete successful building projects.

But it wasn't until he met and married his wife, Ann, that Howard became emotionally involved in certain charitable causes. He gives Ann all the credit for that, saying, “The passion for our charitable giving comes from Ann. We donate to causes that touch our hearts. I have migrated from bricks and mortar to children and animals.”

We greatly appreciate Howard and Ann Peterson's commitment to Dynamy and to our mission, and are pleased to recognize and honor the Peterson family legacy of philanthropy.

