



SPONSOR
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YEAR
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CHANGING
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INTERNSHIP YEAR ■ YOUTH ACADEMY

Dynamiy

EXPLORE. REFLECT. ACT. FALL 2007

Two Youth Academy Students Chosen for Prestigious Program



Michelle (l) and Masill at the gates of Brown University

When Masill Miranda and Michelle Nasrah were selected to participate in Brown University's Summer Leadership Institute, little did they realize how the experience would change them. The Institute is sponsored each summer by Brown to help participants develop their leadership skills and meet other students from across the country. The daily schedule of the primarily academic program includes formal classes and discussion, writing papers and working on group projects, outdoor experiential education activities, and social time. Both girls received a \$2,500

scholarship toward the \$3,000 two-week residential program, and were required to contribute the remainder.

As the only latino and middle-eastern women in the program, as well as two of the few students attending through scholarships, Masill and Michelle experienced a bit of culture shock when interacting with the other mostly suburban, upper-middle class, Caucasian students. Initially intimidated because of their differences, the girls grew more comfortable sharing their backgrounds and struggles with their peers, rather than trying to "fit the mold". During daily classes about the

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MASSILL'S AND MICHELLE'S SELECTION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE BROWN UNIVERSITY SUMMER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, HONORS, AND AWARDS ACHIEVED IN RECENT MONTHS BY OUR YOUTH ACADEMY STUDENTS. SOME ADDITIONAL SAMPLINGS:

- *Sarah Sekyi* – Selected by her guidance counselor at Doherty High School, Sarah participated in the summer Upward Bound program at Worcester State College;
- *Edvina Lila* – Selected to attend the Honors Society of High School Honors Conference in Washington D C., where she received a medal of academic achievement;
- *Elizabeth Pichardo* – Selected to serve on the Planning Committee of the Keystone Leaders (a leadership group sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club) National Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania;
- *Martin Gjoni* – Received a \$50 college scholarship toward his tuition at Worcester State College from Kohl's in recognition of his extensive community service at the Worcester Public Library;
- *Janily Lopez* – Received a \$500 college scholarship toward tuition at Becker College from Latino Dollars for Scholars;
- *Fatima Rivera* – Received a \$500 college scholarship toward tuition at Framingham State College from Latino Dollars for Scholars;
- *Kathryn Goyette* – Selected to participate in the United Way Points of Light Leadership Institute;
- *Joelina DeLacruz* – Selected by her biology teacher to attend a weeklong marine biology program in Nantucket.

civil rights movement, Masill and Michelle were able to share their life experiences with others and eventually found themselves becoming the focal point of group discussion, a new and very affirming and empowering place to be.

Masill and Michelle both describe their participation in this program as "life changing". It not only reinforced the lessons they are learning in Youth Academy, it truly opened their eyes for the first time to the world beyond Doherty and North High Schools, urban poverty, and what it is going to take for them to be successful in their quests to become the first member of their families to graduate from college. Both girls returned from Providence much more focused on their college dreams and prepared to work harder to make their dreams come true.

Brown University was very pleased with the caliber of students they accepted from Dynamy. We hope to continue this partnership next year, and expect the competition for participation to heat up as Masill and Michelle share their experiences with younger students later this fall and encourage them to apply. ■



In response to a clear need, we strengthened the Youth Academy program this year by incorporating activities that would keep our students engaged and active in the program during the out-of-school summer months. Providing programming for our students over the summer allowed for even more individual advising, strengthened the sense of community in the program, and helped to maintain momentum for participants upon the start of school in the fall.

“What About Dynamy?”

Internship Year from a parent's perspective

by Diane Pingeton (Zak, class of '07)

It was the beginning of my son Zak's senior year at Shrewsbury High School, and I was worried. Zak had absolutely no interest in his academic work. He was certainly not ready to think about college, and it seemed he may not even graduate from high school. (I regretted not sending him to a vocational high school, and yet Zak had no idea what vocation he might pursue.)

I was with a group of women friends, expressing my concerns, when one of them said, "What about Dynamy?"

I knew that what Zak really needed was to be mentored by other responsible adults who were not his parents. He might listen to them! Zak was very interested, and we applied and waited. Zak knew he would need to graduate high

school in order to attend Dynamy, and so buckled down. Alleluia, Zak was accepted to Dynamy, and he graduated from Shrewsbury High!

But as the departure date for Outward Bound approached, Zak was nervous. He was worried that he might not get along with the other interns. He was worried about the strict nonsmoking rule at Outward Bound. He tried to quit to no avail. I loaded him up with nicotine gum and off he went.

Every time the phone rang during those 18 days, I prayed it wasn't Dynamy calling to say he had been kicked out. But Zak did complete Outward Bound, with great stories and new friendships. There was even a feeling of maturity about him that I hadn't seen before. I was relieved and encouraged.

Zak delved into his first internship at Struck Catering. He immediately fell in love with the culinary arts. And as the fall

progressed, when he came home to visit, I noticed that he had become more responsible and even easier to be around!

Fear of failure struck again as Zak dragged his feet obtaining his second internship placement. He ended up working in retail, then slid right into his third internship, in a restaurant setting. He worked two sites to make up his time. He was not only succeeding, but having fun at Dynamy.

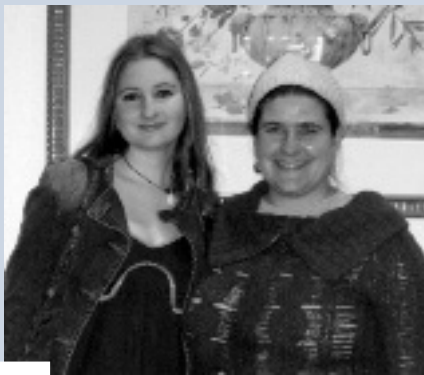
Zak came home for the summer not only a year older, but so much more mature and ready for the next step in life, with a solid direction. Thanks to Dynamy, Zak found his way back to his true self. There were so many different layers of mentorship -- the other kids, the advisors, the internships. They all contributed to an amazing year of transformation.

Zak's acceptance letter to the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont came this week. He starts September 6th! ■

Sponsors of the Year

Internships are at the heart of the Dynamy experience, and we are grateful to all of our sponsors for their commitment to mentoring and teaching our students. However, each year, there are sponsors who make an extraordinary contribution, and we recognize them at our graduation ceremonies with a Sponsor of the Year award.

The Regional Environmental Council



The Regional Environmental Council (REC) has been a prominent and respected organization in Worcester since 1971. Dedicated to improving the quality of life by improving the environment, the REC operates programs such as Urban Community Gardens (UGROW) and Youth Grow, which work to provide an alternative to corporate agriculture by growing food locally and encouraging the whole community to participate; the Environmental Health and Justice Program, which works to prevent lead poisoning and encourage recycling; and an advocacy and public education program that includes initiatives to increase public awareness about environmental issues. Dynamy has benefited from a great relationship with the REC, as, year after year, our interns have been interested in contributing to and learning about The Council's important causes.

Casey Burns, Coordinator for UGROW and Youth Grow, says, "I'm a sponsor because it's been a good partnership between the REC and Dynamy. We've been able to get some really good extra hands and I think it's been good for the

students. They have done work that they got really interested in and to which they wouldn't have otherwise been exposed."

WCCA – TV Channel 13



WCCA-TV is the Worcester Public Access Television station. Seeking to empower Worcester citizens and promote city pride, WCCA features open forum programming produced by community members, about the community and for the community. Programming can range from human interest stories to local headline news, and they also produce a community calendar with weekly event listings. Each year Dynamy has several students interested in the world of television broadcasting, and WCCA-TV is always a popular and sought after internship placement.

Jennifer Gratham, WCCA Internship Coordinator, says, "What I do here is teach students. I teach them how to use video production equipment and how to produce a show. They learn what it takes from beginning to end to create a program that eventually is put on the air." She adds, "As a sponsor, I want to show students that being committed to learning is important and will definitely be worthwhile."

T & M O'Rourke Property Services

Little did Tim O'Rourke know when he started a part-time cleaning business in 1987 that it would flourish, and transform into T & M



(for his wife, Margaret) O'Rourke Property Services, and that he would become a Dynamy internship sponsor!

Tim, who now owns and manages three multi-family properties in Worcester, started doing part-time maintenance work on Dynamy properties several years ago. These days, he spends approximately 25% of his time helping Dynamy maintain our four buildings.

Last fall he was approached by one of our Internship Year students, Adam Burns, who was looking for an internship in the trades. Although Tim had never considered being a sponsor before, he decided to give it a try. To his surprise, he was a natural born teacher. "I discovered that I valued the process of passing on my skills and knowledge to a willing learner, and enjoyed knowing that I was giving something back to the community", said Tim. Tim exposed Adam to some complex projects, including a bathroom renovation and wood floor refinishing.

Adam had such a positive internship that two other students, later in the year, requested placements with Tim. As the end of the year approached, Tim reflected on this new experience. "In the Dynamy tradition of experiential learning, this was a great year for me. It was even more positive and rewarding than I anticipated, and I look forward to continuing my new second career in teaching!"



Vanessa Agyekum with her advisor, Joseph Corazzini

Youth Academy: Changing Lives

Vanessa Agyekum is exactly the type of student for whom Youth Academy was created. After moving here from her native Ghana five years ago with her mother, father and younger brother, Vanessa’s parents separated, her father left the family, and her world started to fall apart. An honor student in middle school, she was nominated for Youth Academy by a teacher who took an interest in her.

Vanessa found the transition to Burncoat High School extremely difficult. Her mom, who is not fluent in English, was working long hours last year as a custodian at WPI. Vanessa grew increasingly despondent over their family’s situation and her own adjustment issues, and her grades plummeted.

After she began Youth Academy last fall, her advisor, Joseph Corazzini, quickly realized that Vanessa was at a crucial, pivotal point in her adolescent development, and that forces out of her control were nudging her in the wrong direction. At first, Vanessa resisted Joe’s interventions. “I thought he was interfering in my life. But after a while, I realized he was giving me the structure, support and encouragement that was missing in my life.” Joe began meeting with Vanessa’s mom, staying in close touch with Vanessa during non-school hours, and looking for new opportunities for her.

By the end of the school year, Vanessa had clearly begun to make significant changes. By her own admission, she was much more focused on her future, taking her academic progress more seriously, and motivated to change her life circumstances. She came to value and appreciate her relationship with Joe, who she increasingly saw as a father figure.

In the spring, Joe encouraged Vanessa to apply to a two-week summer residential program for high school students at Clark University, Independent Means Camp Start-Up. Vanessa jumped at the chance to participate in the program, which is designed to introduce students to the world of business, and was accepted with a full scholarship. Her success in this program solidified her goals of reaching higher for herself. She now dreams of becoming a pediatrician.

As she prepares to enter her second year of high school and of Youth Academy, Vanessa reflected on how this program has changed her life the past year. “I’m the type of person who needs encouragement, and Dynamy is helping me every step of the way. Thanks to Joe, things are improving. He wants to make me a better person, and I want to show him I can be a better person. One day, I’m going to help my brother just like Joe is helping me.”



A significant part of the Dynamy experience for students is community involvement and participation. For a springtime community service project, Elaine Barr, an Internship Year student, recruited 15 other students to participate in a walkathon to benefit “Taking Steps to End Violence Against Women & Children.” Dynamy students raised almost \$500 for this important cause.



The Only Constant

Exactly ten years ago as I write this letter, September 1997, I began my career at Dynamy. In addition to the learning model on which we base our approach (*intention, action, reflection, repeat*), the only constant I see over that time is change. Sometimes change is a slow evolution, barely noticed on a day-to-day basis. Many times, change stands out when it punctuates our equilibrium, counters our expectations, and forces us to look at things anew.

Dynamy experienced an unexpected spurt of change this year: we closed our expansion site in Santa Rosa, California due to low Internship Year enrollment and underwent a leadership transition. Against all expectations, we were unable to attract students to Northern California, yet maintained steady enrollment here in Massachusetts. We took a risk, put our best foot forward, but, in this endeavor, failed.

In the disappointment with this outcome, I found myself reflecting on the many times students made decisions, energetically acted on them, and yet still arrived in places of discomfort, upset, and failure. How many times has that dynamic played out for students over our 38-year history? And what do we always say to them? *You're okay, you've learned from this, and let's figure out what's next for you.* Most learning comes from such difficulty, especially if one is willing to pay attention to the new information and move forward.

And we are already moving forward this fall: our Internship Year enrollment is higher than it has been in three years; our Youth Academy is operating at full capacity (a 40% student increase from four years ago); and, we have begun a strategic planning process focusing on what we truly do well and asking the question, "What's next?". Staff members, friends of Dynamy, and alumni are already exploring possible answers to that question. I look forward to discovering answers and sharing them with you over the coming year.

Regards,

Fred Kaelin
Executive Director

Class of 2007 Graduations

Internship Year and Youth Academy

The end of the academic year brought celebrations for our 32 students who graduated from either the Internship Year or Youth Academy program.

Internship Year ceremonies were held May 19 at The College of the Holy Cross, and included Sponsor of the Year awards, reflections on the year by Elizabeth Mitchell and a musical performance by Nina Palisano, both graduating students. Parents and extended families gathered to help the graduates celebrate their accomplishments.

Youth Academy ceremonies took place at Clark University on May 23. Families were in attendance to wish the graduates congratulations on completing the rigorous four year program, and to wish them well as they make the transition to college freshmen.

Internship Year Graduates

Elaine Barr
Adam Burns
Josh Cooley
Lianna Davies
Mario Espinosa
Matt Forcella
Evan Gannon
Tara Greenwald

Devin Kerrigan
Michael Lanman
Adam Lefkowitz
Zak Lindgren
Laura Menzie
Elizabeth Mitchell
Katherine Mock

Nina Palisano
Greg Purdy
Laura Raines
Blake Raphael
Samuel Shapiro
David Thompson
Michaela Twarog



Youth Academy Graduates

Lorna Andino
Brittney Brooks
Cesar Burgos
Jessica Gain
Martin Gjoni
Janily Lopez
Sonia Miranda
William Paige
Michael Riggieri
Fatima Rivera



We congratulate all our 2007 graduates and wish them success as they move on to college or other adventures.



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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.

Thomas Dube
President, Board of Trustees

Fred Kaelin
Executive Director

Janice Curley
Editor

Linda Dagnello
Designer

www.dynamy.org

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!



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

