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INTERNSHIP YEAR ■ YOUTH ACADEMY

# Dynamy

WINTER 2007

## Fifth Year Initiative supports Youth Academy students in college



Juan, Vangjush, and Nathaniel, all sophomore Youth Academy students, on a recent visit to The College of the Holy Cross Campus

**M**aking the adjustment to life on a college campus is a challenge for most students. For graduates of Dynamy's Youth Academy, first in their families to attend college, the challenges can be daunting.

To help Youth Academy graduates through those first crucial months in college, Dynamy has created a new program, the Fifth Year Initiative, to extend the supportive relationships the students developed with counselors and each other.

The Fifth Year Initiative, begun this fall, keeps advisors in contact with students through email and

telephone, individual and group meetings and workshops. Dynamy's website is being upgraded to include an area developed exclusively for Fifth Year Initiative students, so they can contact their advisors and fellow students regardless of their geographic location.

"This continued support will help to ensure that Worcester youth from minority and low-income families will reverse the pattern of low educational attainment rates and become role models within their families and community," said Jim Zuberbuhler, Dynamy's executive director.

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**W**ith this issue of the Newsletter you will notice a new format, designed to focus on the work that we do with young people at Dynamy. We think a good way to do this is through articles about our students, who have remarkable stories. There are pieces about internship and community service opportunities and a profile of a volunteer; in this issue we highlight our irreplaceable board chair, Tom Dube. The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is a long-time supporter of the Youth Academy and the funding provided by Nellie Mae has enabled Dynamy to provide the resources necessary to building a strong program to serve these extraordinary young people. Most issues will also include a piece about something new at Dynamy; this issue has a story about our 5th Year Initiative that is designed to support Youth Academy students during their first year at college. Of course, you'll see articles and photos about Dynamy programs in both Massachusetts and California.



A significant change with this new format is that we are no longer including the alumni class notes in the Newsletter; we felt that our new website would be a more effective place for these and would afford alums more space for updates, photos, etc. You can look forward to receiving three issues of the Dynamy Newsletter each year (Fall, Winter and Spring).

Enjoy!

Jim Zuberbuhler  
Executive Director

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Even though the current graduation rate is an admirable 73%, “we think we can do better,” Zuberbuhler added. “The support from the Fifth Year Initiative during their first year in college will ultimately translate into higher rates of graduation from college for our Dynamy students.”

The need for extra support was revealed in a follow-up study of Youth Academy graduates commissioned by Dynamy three years ago. The study found that the biggest challenge comes during the initial transition from high school to being on their own in college.

One Youth Academy graduate who attended Assumption College in Worcester said he felt as if the neighborhood he grew up in was “15 hours instead of 15 minutes away.”

Graduates noted that it was difficult to manage their time in college, given their work and family responsibilities. Fitting in socially was another challenge, with several graduates noting that there were few students of color on campus or that they had difficulty relating to students from more advantaged backgrounds. Some who found that they were not ready for the demands of college courses faced serious academic challenges.

“We realized there is a gap between the academic work many students do in high school and what they’re required to do in college,” said Fred Kaelin, Dynamy’s director of education. “But Youth Academy graduates tend to have developed resilience. Instead of throwing up their hands and saying ‘It’s too hard,’ they are seeking out help.”

Kaelin says he’s encouraged that many Youth Academy graduates have asked to return to Dynamy to speak to current students about the challenges they will face in college.

## Internships: The Heart of the Dynamy Experience



**D**uring a nine week internship with the Humane Society and SPCA of Sonoma County, working 35 hours per week, Erica, a Dynamy Internship Year student, learned a range of skills from comforting owners of missing pets to conducting blood tests for heartworm and feline leukemia. The internship experience reaffirmed her love of animals, but more importantly, helped Erica decide that she will not pursue a veterinary career. Her next internship is with Roots for Youth, a court referral program using theatre where Erica will be performing and working with teenagers. The warmth and enthusiasm she has already demonstrated have earned Erica recognition from her fellow internship year students who voted her the humanitarian of the group.

**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

## Dynamy honors the Nellie Mae Education Foundation



Nellie Mae  
Education  
Foundation

Opening Doors to Tomorrow

**D**ynamy recently honored the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's strong support of Youth Academy with a tribute to the Foundation as a Philanthropist of Distinction. Jay Sherwin, senior program officer, accepted the award for the Foundation during the observance of National Philanthropy Day, an event sponsored by the Association of Fund Raising Professionals of Central Massachusetts.

Support from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation has enabled Youth Academy to grow and develop, noted Jim Zuberbuhler, Dynamy's executive director.

"In the past six years, grants from Nellie Mae have totaled more than \$480,000," he said. "They have been vital to the success and continued operation of this important program."

Nellie Mae Education Foundation is New England's largest public charity dedicated to improving academic achievement for the region's underserved communities.

Dynamy's Youth Academy is a leadership and college access program for promising high school students from minority and low-income families. Youth Academy students receive four years of intensive after-school academic support and mentoring. Internships, leadership development and assistance in the college search and application process are other components of the Youth Academy program.

Four years ago, Dynamy was included in Nellie Mae's Minority High

Achievement Initiative that funds a dozen programs throughout New England.

"We have been able to develop collegial relationships with Jay and the leaders of other organizations and share best practices," Zuberbuhler said.

According to Sherwin, Dynamy's "long-term, intensive, highly personalized interventions to help minority and low income students achieve academic success is a perfect fit" with Nellie Mae's funding objectives.

"The quality and depth of the relationships between Youth Academy students and their advisors is something Dynamy should feel very proud of," Sherwin added.

Dynamy was among four of the Nellie Mae funded programs included in a recent study by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The study found that the Youth Academy offers significant benefits to its students.

In addition to general operating support, Nellie Mae funded a follow-up survey of Youth Academy graduates demonstrating that the vast majority (92 percent) continued their education beyond high school.

Nellie Mae has also awarded Dynamy one-time grants for development of a marketing plan for Youth Academy, and the technology laboratory for Youth Academy students.



*Casi, a Youth Academy student, works on a neighborhood banner as part of a recent community service project.*

## Community Service: a

**H**elping Dynamy students make the connection between picking up trash along the banks of the river near the Santa Rosa site and a successful college application is one of the challenges facing Ellen Supple as she stresses the importance of community service.

"It's all about leadership and character development," said Supple, director of Dynamy's Santa Rosa site. "Doing community service is an important part of that process. It's also important in building college resumes."

Community-building and community action are at the heart of Dynamy's educational model.

"Our community service requirement encourages students to consider the issues they



## Struck Catering gives would-be chefs a taste...

**D**ynamy interns get to taste the excitement and digest the reality of the food business, thanks to Barbara Cotter, owner of Struck Catering in Worcester. Cotter has sponsored Dynamy interns since 1994.

Although being a chef is not as glamorous as Food Network shows and glossy publications would have them believe, after nine 35-hour weeks in Struck's kitchen, Dynamy interns have a good idea if they have what it takes to pursue a career in the food industry.

Interns at Struck Catering aren't pampered, Cotter says. "At the end of the day they're mopping the floor just like the rest of the staff."

That's after hours of chopping vegetables, whisking egg whites and any number

of other kitchen chores vital to food presentation.

Zak, a Dynamy Internship Year student, recently completed his first internship at Struck Catering. He is seriously considering further education at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America.

"Zak is one of our stars," Cotter said. "He brings a lot to the kitchen, including a great camaraderie. He came to work every day ready to learn."

Interns like Zak bring a fresh perspective, Cotter noted. "It's great to have young people in the mix. They help keep spirits up and keep us in the know about trends."

For his part, Zak says his Struck Catering experience was very positive.

"I liked working at parties," he said. "You work so hard on the food, it's fun to see how everything you worked so hard on is executed."

Cotter emphasized her commitment to Dynamy. "I believe in the organization," she said. "Sometimes it's hard for high school graduates to make that next move. But with job experience, they see what they can do with their education."

Fred Kaelin, Dynamy's director of education, noted the importance of the commitment made by sponsors like Cotter.

"Internships are at the heart of Dynamy," he said. "We are grateful to Barbara and all our sponsors for their commitment to helping and mentoring our students."

## a lesson in leadership

care about in the world and to take action by putting real energy or work into them," Supple said.

Students at Dynamy have participated in several other community service projects including fund raising walks, tutoring and doing chores at an organic farm.

Not only are students learning from their experience, the Dynamy staff, too, has adapted their approach to community service.

"We've learned that the students prefer to volunteer in a group rather than as individuals," Supple said. "So we look for opportunities that will accomplish our community service goals and build group spirit too."



*Barbara Cotter, owner of Struck Catering, with Zak, an Internship Year student who completed an internship there in the fall.*

# Dynamy's new president is a builder



Tom Dube in his office at Cutler Associates

First he helped build the carriage house, now Dynamy's new president of the board of trustees is building support for Dynamy's programs.

Tom Dube is senior project manager for Cutler Associates, an architectural, engineering and construction company where he's supervised a range of high profile projects including a luxury spa, a gamma ray irradiation plant and one of the largest university residence hall projects in Cutler's history.

Dube was tapped to join Dynamy's board in 1998 in the early stages of the carriage house restoration because of his knowledge of the construction industry. He treasures a memento given him by David Rynick, former executive director of Dynamy, with its inscription honoring him for his exceptional oversight of the multi-year project.

His journey from bricks and mortar to governance included a two-year term as vice

president where Dube broadened his business and management skills, serving on finance and executive committees.

One of the accomplishments he's most proud of is "serving on the search committee that found Jim Zuberbuhler and convinced him to move from Idaho to Worcester," he said.

Dube looks forward to developing Dynamy's programs in Santa Rosa and spreading the word about the value of the gap year experience at the California and Worcester sites.

He's been touched by the stories of Youth Academy students who overcome challenges and adversity to achieve their goals.

"When I'm asked to speak at Dynamy events, it's easy for me to speak from the heart," he said.

"I've totally bought into the mission," Dube concluded. "My time volunteering with Dynamy is a time investment I enjoy making."



## A place where she belongs

At Dynamy's Youth Academy, Massill says she has "found a place where I belong." Massill, a junior at Doherty High School in Worcester, is a young woman with great potential who is wise beyond her years. From the time she was nine years old, she acted as a translator for her mother, who came to the United States from the Dominican Republic and her father, who grew up in El Salvador.

In middle school, Massill's teachers recognized her potential. "They were pushing me to work at a higher level," she said, "and I found the work came easy for me."

Her science teacher told her about Dynamy's Youth Academy, with its promise of college scholarships to students who qualify. When she was accepted into the program, Massill burst into tears. "All I could think of at the time was college tuition," she said, "But Youth Academy has come to mean so much more to me."

During a year when life at home was in turmoil, Massill spent most of her spare time at Dynamy.

"She was camped out, waiting, when we were installing the new computers," said Raquel Castro, Massill's Dynamy advisor. "When we finally got the computers hooked up, Massill was the first online."

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Massill on opening day



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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.

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[www.dynamy.org](http://www.dynamy.org)

In the three years she's been in the program, Massill has learned independence as she travels to her internship and other events with her Dynamy-issued bus pass.

"I've learned so much about the city and about myself," she said. "I'm comfortable doing things on my own."

Massill's first internship is at Worcester Academy where she assists Rodney Glasgow, head of the theatre department and director of diversity. Glasgow says he's been impressed with her eagerness to learn and contribute.

Besides schoolwork and fulfilling the requirements of the Dynamy program, Massill works part-time with her parents at a fast food restaurant.

"I didn't realize how hard they worked, what little respect they get and how small the paycheck is at the end of the week," she said. "That convinced me I needed to get a college education."

Massill's goal is to work in social services, "maybe counseling," she says.

When students from Dynamy attended a conference at Assumption College, she heard a woman from the Middle East speak about her life, noting that women there always had to defer to men.

"I realized how happy I am to walk alone," Massill said. "I don't have to depend on anyone."

