



**PROJECT
SUCCESS™**

Where students connect
to their purpose

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2019

WELCOME TO OUR THIRD ISSUE! 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



JUNE 2019 CONTRIBUTORS

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WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

Contact Sai Chang
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We are looking for alumni to write,
edit, take photos and more!

DEAR PROJECT SUCCESS ALUMNI,

On January 3rd, 2019, Project Success turned 25 years old. It's been a very special year of celebration, reflection, hard work, and gratitude. We welcomed this milestone with a new look to elevate the PS brand to match the consistent quality and success we've been recognized for over the years. The reimagined Project Success logo represents the unique path every student takes in their journey to self-discovery and the letters are individually designed as 'building blocks' that support the process and goals each student sets to put their dreams into action.

I began Project Success with a dream when I was 25 years old, and that dream hasn't changed. It is to inspire young people to dream about their future, help them take steps to get there, and then give them through experiences, discussions, and opportunities, the tools that will take them through the rest of their lives. Project Success is where students connect to their purpose.

Thanks to partnerships with the University of Minnesota and Minneapolis Public Schools, our programs have been evaluated and our data, analyzed. We have proof that students build and gain in the areas of GPA – one of the greatest predictors of success – self-awareness, attendance rate, goal-setting, and importantly, in graduation rates when they participate in PS programs.

Three years ago, we made a plan to double and deepen our impact and expand the opportunities for students. To do that, we needed to raise \$10 million on top of our annual fund. Today, we are two thirds to our goal of \$10 million for our Dreams to Futures campaign to connect more students to more futures in more communities. When we launched this idea, we were serving 11,500 students at 15 schools. We started our 25th anniversary year working with more than 14,000 students and their families at 19 schools. We are going big and we still have work to do because we have a bold vision for the future. Over the last 25 years, we have increased the opportunities that we offer and we are offering them to even more students. At the end of this campaign, we will serve every single Minneapolis 6-12 grade student. This fall, we are adding four new schools – serving 1,500 more students – thanks to the Dreams to Futures campaign. I have so much hope for the future, and through this issue, I am excited to share how you can stay involved with all that we are doing at Project Success.



Sincerely,

Adrienne Diercks, Founder and Executive Director

PROJECT SUCCESS™

Where students connect to their purpose

CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOOK!

Project Success celebrates its **25th** year with a
bold new look and a deeper focus on connecting
students to their purpose.

LATEST NEWS

WHAT'S NEW
AT PROJECT SUCCESS?

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA ADVENTURES



THEN

At Project Success, we've seen the impact of bringing students to the great outdoors for 20 YEARS; our first Boundary Waters trips were in 1999! Today more than ever, getting outside can be a life-changing experience for students.

THEMES OF STRENGTH AND INDEPENDENCE IN MEXICO

Project Success has a longstanding and special relationship with Minneapolis sister city Cuernavaca, the state of Morelos and the surrounding areas of Mexico. This spring, nine more Project Success students had the opportunity to experience Mexico first hand during a six-day trip focused on identity, history and culture. [Read more.](#)



NOW

LIFE-CHANGING EXPEDITION TO WASHINGTON D.C.

In February and April, Project Success took two separate groups of 50 students to our nation's capital to visit the historic, political and cultural center that is Washington, D.C. Our group visited Howard University, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), and important monuments and sites in the city. The latest trip in April became our fourth global expedition to Washington, D.C. [Read more.](#)



JAMES RONE INSTITUTE PROGRAM MANAGER

James Rone joined the Project Success team in 2017 as the Project Success Institute Program Manager. As a performing artist, youth worker, and certified teacher, he brings a unique perspective and approach to fostering an environment of learning, growth, and community within the Institute.

Now in its third session of the year, the Project Success Institute is a new multi-purpose classroom space offering a series of 10-week certificate-earning programs. Programming is offered to Project Success high school students four nights per week, providing students the opportunity to earn certificates in Health and Wellness, Coding, Performing Arts, and Finance.

James uses the metaphor of a restaurant to describe how the Institute's offerings expand what is available to students. He remembers that when he was growing up in England, his town only had a couple of restaurants, so along with the food he had at home, that was all he knew. When he moved to the United States at age 11, he realized there were so many other things "on the menu" that he didn't know about before.

At the Institute, Project Success expands the "menu" of options students can explore - instead of food, this menu includes interests, career paths, and practical skills. He says, "Because we live sometimes very narrow, segregated existences, we don't have the opportunity to see what kinds of opportunities are available to us, whereas there are other folks who are taking full advantage of those

STAFF PROFILE



JAMES WITH A STUDENT
IN AN INSTITUTE
CODING COURSE

opportunities, because perhaps they're connected to people who live those lives ... And so for me, a big part of the Project Success Institute is helping folks understand what else is on the menu, so if they want to, they could order it. And if they don't, they don't have to."

James' background is in theater - he is a performer and has a background in curriculum design, nonprofit arts administration, and prior to joining PS, spent four years as a public school teacher.

As a young person, he "found his people" in a youth theater troupe. He also recalls a director he worked with as a young person who stood out because he treated James like a professional actor. These experiences inform James' approach to working with young people today: "I try to treat them like whole people. *'Kids first' is not just a mantra here [at Project Success].*"

GET INVOLVED!

Support Project Success Institute programming as a volunteer.

The Project Success Institute offers flexible and impactful volunteer opportunities that range from driving students to and from Project Success, providing 1:1 support to students during our programs, and more. Some programs are also taught by volunteers who have an interest or skill in one of the topic areas.

If you're interested in volunteering, contact James: jamesr@projectsuccess.org or 612-876-3932

Visit projectsuccess.org for more Project Success news!

INSTITUTE PROGRAMS



STUDENTS EARN FINANCIAL LITERACY CERTIFICATES



STUDENTS LEARN TO MAKE AFFORDABLE AND HEALTHY MEALS



STUDENTS TAKE TURNS DOING SOLO PERFORMANCES



STUDENTS LEARN VARIOUS CODING LANGUAGES AT AN INDIVIDUALIZED PACE

ALUMNI UPDATES

What kind of impact did Project Success have on you?

My mother was a single mother, never went to college and could not help me with the college process. Project Success provided me with coaching, counseling and guidance in the entire process from the application to admission essays.

What new skills did Project Success help you develop?

When I was applying for college, I was going to only submit one application. However, my Project Success facilitator informed me that I should always have a backup plan. Project Success instilled in me that I should expand my horizons and to have more than one option.

What are you doing now?

I am currently a surgical nurse at the VA Medical Center, I have been on the Board of Directors for Hope Community and started a new role as their Co-Chair. I am also a full-time graduate student at Augsburg University studying to receive my doctorates in nursing practice to become a family nurse practitioner.



MUNA ABDIRAHMAN
SOUTH HIGH '06

What new skills or life tools did Project Success help you develop?

The main thing I got out of Project Success was exposure to a variety of colleges and types of schools. I don't think Project Success had an impact on my set of skills or life tools but they did help me think about how I would apply the ones I had towards my post-graduate life.

Is there a particular story or experience that comes to mind when you think of Project Success?

The memory that has stuck with me the most is of an in class activity. We were instructed to build a certain structure out of popsicle sticks. Half way through the task my facilitator told us to literally smash our project, and redesign it with the pieces that were left. It broke my heart to destroy something I had just spent thoughtful time making, and I had to assess what I could do with what I actually had. This lesson has come up in my life over and over again.

What are you doing now?

This year I started my own small business, a micro-bakery in South Minneapolis called Black Bread Baking. It's been a completely new challenge for me, and so exciting. Follow Sarah at blackbreadbaking.com, blackbreadbaking@gmail.com or on Instagram [@black bread baking](https://www.instagram.com/black_bread_baking).



SARAH BLACK
SOUTH HIGH '06

For **Jocelyn McQuirter, North High class of 2006**, her path after high school has reflected her diverse array of interests and talents. Today, Jocelyn is working on Master's degree and works with Hennepin County's Center for Innovation and Excellence, where she builds capacity and trains people on human-centered design thinking in both policy and practice. She takes writing classes at the Loft, and is working toward a goal of one day publishing a children's book or two focused on body positivity and cultural identity.

Her advice to 2019 graduates: "Experience is one of the best teachers in life and will guide you to your life purpose. You'll find your purpose with self-discovery of why you are here and what value, mark and meaning you want to leave. Go big and keep shining."



JOCELYN MCQUIRTER
NORTH HIGH '06

ALUMNI PROFILE

NOAH BRANCH
PATRICK HENRY HIGH '17



NOW

NOAH BRANCH

PROJECT SUCCESS
EXPERIENCE

Patrick Henry High School '17

NOW

Noah attends the University of Minnesota and is pursuing a theater major.

While going to school, he is also pursuing opportunities throughout the Twin Cities. Currently he is at Penumbra Theatre as one of their Summer Institute Interns, working with high schoolers to explore performance creation and theater.

Noah Branch had his first Project Success experience as a freshman at Patrick Henry High School in 2013 during an in-class workshop delivered by his facilitator, Kurt, and later on with Micah during his junior and senior year.

The workshops and his Project Success facilitators were the most impactful part of Project Success for him.

“Having people who were somewhat detached from the educator role [like our teachers] but with experience and in the position to give advice to students helped us build trust,” he says. “It was easy to connect with Kurt and Micah.”

For Noah, the workshops allowed space for him to think about things happening outside of school and helped take away the stress of academics.

“They came into the classroom and talked about important things, but made it accessible and fun. It was nice to have that space to think about our futures apart from what we did

every day in high school.”

For instance, Noah recalls a workshop senior year about finances, delivered by Micah. “Micah made it real and tangible,” he said. “He helped us see how we could apply it to our lives then. Now, I realize it was an insight into making those decisions for myself today, as a 20 year old college student.”

Additionally, the workshops helped Noah realize his passion for theater. A performer since grade school, Noah’s earliest memory of acting was landing a role as a mime in a summer program in 1st grade. A successful audition in grade 5 secured him a role at the SteppingStone Theater’s production of *My Grandmother’s Tsochkes: Tales of a Gambling Grandma*. It was during this rehearsal process that Noah experienced and understood the inner workings of putting on a play, both on and off the stage, and he loved it.

Noah continued to perform throughout middle school at The FAIR School with roles such as Soda Pop from *The Outsiders* and Zero in *Holes* – his favorite role. In high school at Patrick Henry, Noah took a break from acting. It wasn’t until his senior year that he reconnected with acting when he auditioned for and got the role of Aladdin.



NOAH AS
ALADDIN IN
PATRICK HENRY’S
PRODUCTION OF
ALADDIN, 2013

NOAH IN 7TH
GRADE PLAYING
THE CHARACTER
OF ZERO IN THE
MUSICAL HOLES

THEN

In the fall of 2017, he began his undergrad at the University of Minnesota, declaring a chemistry major at first. But a passion for theater remained deeply rooted in Noah. He continued with chemistry classes until, after talks with his advisor, he reached a point where he realized that his passions might lie elsewhere.

“There’s going to be a point where you find yourself doing what you don’t want to do. When you get there, stop doing it,” Noah recalled a saying he once heard. “That’s what I’d like to share with these new high school graduates.”

“There’s going to be a point where find yourself doing what you don’t want to do. When you get there, stop doing it.”

Now in his third year at the University, Noah has switched from a chemistry major to a theater major. “I want to make my impact in the theater industry,” says Noah.

“I want to be an actor and hope to move out of Minnesota, get into an MFA program and ultimately come



back to Minnesota to work for the Guthrie or Penumbra Theater. That’s the goal.”

Long-term, Noah is looking to create bigger impact in his community by founding a nonprofit children’s theater serving North Minneapolis.

STAY INVOLVED

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Equity and Access

Project Success works diligently to break down barriers to access for students in our Arts programs through:

- **Free Programs:** Many of our experiences are offered at no cost to our students and families, thanks to generous supporters and donors.
- **Transportation:** Providing access to transportation to and from our programming for those who need it.
- **Staffing:** For many families, seeing theater is a brand new experience. We staff each of our theater performances to ensure families are personally welcomed before and after the show.

Our greatest student need is in transportation. Students have shared that barriers to access the programs such as reliable transportation have made it more challenging for them to participate. Consider signing up to be a volunteer driver and help get a student on a college tour, the BWCA or experience live professional theater!

Learn more: projectsuccess.org/volunteer



ALUMNI
WEBSITE



VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES



MAKE A
GIFT



CELEBRATING
25 YEARS
OF PROJECT
SUCCESS AT
THE DREAMS
TO ACTION
BREAKFAST



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ADRIENNE DIERCKS (MIDDLE) WITH PROJECT SUCCESS ALUMNI FROM SOME OF HER FIRST WORKSHOPS AT NORTH HIGH