



Next Step to Success Weekly Update

A Message from our Executive Director



James Harris

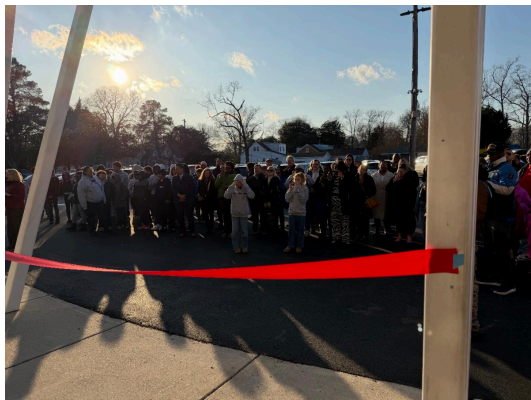
As we move into Week 21, we are excited to share the continued growth of Next Step to Success through our expanding network of community partnerships. We are proud to welcome Strong Roots, EmpoweredPath, and Tidewater Community College to the NSTS family. Each of these partners brings valuable resources, mentorship, and pathways that will add depth to our programming and create new opportunities for our youth to learn, grow, and thrive.

We also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us for our Ribbon Cutting. The turnout was truly amazing, filled with community members, families, supporters, and new acquaintances who share our belief in the potential of Norfolk's youth. Your presence and encouragement made the day incredibly special and meaningful.

As we continue building for the future, we invite you to support our mission by participating in our Brick Fundraiser. Please visit our website or see the link at the bottom of our newsletter, to purchase a commemorative brick and help leave a lasting legacy that directly supports our students and programs.

Together, we are building something powerful thank you for being part of the journey.

James Harris
Executive Director



Introducing our Student of the Week





Cheyenne

Meet a dedicated 10th grader from Booker T. Washington High School who has been part of the Next Step to Success family for the past two years. Known for being equal parts silent, chaotic, and silly, Cheyenne finds joy in showing up, seeing friends, and building toward a future full of possibility. With a strong love for math, music, and community, Cheyenne continues to grow both academically and personally through his time at NSTS.

1. What is your name and grade? **10th – Booker T. High School**
2. How long have you been a part of Next Step to Success? **2 years**
3. What do you like most about coming to NSTS? **Seeing my friends**
4. What is one goal you're working on right now? **I would like to get a job**
5. Who inspires you the most, and why? **Coach Carly**
6. What is your favorite subject in school? **Math**
7. What activities or hobbies do you enjoy outside of school? **Gaming and playing my instrument (Viola)**
8. What's your favorite book, movie, or song right now? **Movie: Lion King**
9. What does success mean to you? **Reaching your goals**

10. If you could give advice to another student, what would it be? **If you fall down, you can always get back up!**

11. What do you see yourself doing in the future (career, dreams, or big goals)? **I would like to be a musician or Chef**

12. Share a fun fact about yourself most people don't know! **My family have 3 X boxes!**

13. Is there someone at NSTS (staff or peer) who has made a big difference for you? **Coach Carly**

14. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Silent, Chaotic and Silly**

15. What makes you proud of yourself this week? **I am here!**

Inspired by Coach Carly and driven by the belief that success means reaching your goals—no matter how many times you have to get back up—Cheyenne is working toward securing a job and dreaming big about a future as a musician or chef. Whether gaming, playing the viola, or proudly just being present, Cheyenne reminds us that progress starts with showing up. And this week, that's exactly what he did!

NSTS Leadership Insights



Education Update Carly Gelles

As we wrap up the week, I want to remind families that report cards went home this week. Please be sure to submit your child's grades for the first half of the school year so we can continue to provide targeted academic support. If needed, we are happy to make a copy of report cards here to help ensure they make it home and are shared with our team.

I also want to encourage families to stay mindful of upcoming scholarship and college application deadlines. This is a critical time for our students, especially those planning for postsecondary options, and staying organized now can make a big difference later.

If you have any academic concerns or questions about your child's progress, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly. We are officially halfway through the school year, and this is a great opportunity to reset, refocus, and push even harder to finish the second half strong. Together, we can continue supporting our students as they work toward their goals.

Please feel free to reach out to me at cgelles@nextsteptosuccess.org with any questions or concerns so we can continue to support your child's academic success.



Programming Update Kaelyn Hundley

This week, our youth had a great time participating in the ribbon-cutting ceremony and being part of such an exciting moment. They also got creative by making picture frames out of popsicle sticks. To wrap up the week, youth explored career readiness through fun and interactive activities like Career Bingo and a Career Kahoot, making learning engaging and enjoyable for everyone.



Operations Update Muhanna Ernesto Garcia

Daily Engagement Matters

Consistent attendance is essential to ensuring every youth receives the full benefit of Next Step To Success programming. Regular participation allows our team to provide ongoing academic support, enrichment experiences, and individualized care to meet each youth's needs. At a minimum, youth are expected to attend the program three days per week. When multiple days are missed, youth may need to be reintroduced to program expectations and may miss out on valuable learning and engagement opportunities offered on campus.

We understand that extracurricular activities, work, or other commitments may arise. If your youth will be absent due to these circumstances, please notify us by emailing mgarcia@nextsteptosuccess.org. Thank you for your partnership in helping us support your child's growth and success.

Weather

Winter Storm Safety Notification

Due to the Winter Storm Warning and the possibility of blizzard conditions, we encourage all families to prioritize safety during this time. Please take the following precautions:

- Monitor local weather updates and alerts regularly.
- Avoid unnecessary travel, especially during periods of heavy snow, ice, or

- reduced visibility.
- Ensure your home is stocked with essential supplies, including food, water, medications, and flashlights.
- Dress in warm layers and limit outdoor exposure.
- Check in on children, elders, and neighbors who may need additional support.
- If you must travel, do so cautiously and allow extra time.

As of right now, there are no updates regarding programming on Monday, February 2, 2026; however, we will do our very best to send out notifications as far in advance as possible to keep you informed of any changes.

To stay up to date on the latest weather alerts, please click here: <https://www.wavy.com/weather/weather-alerts/>

Your safety and well-being are our top priority. Thank you for your partnership, and please stay safe and warm.



Success Coach Spotlight



Coach Kim!

Please join us in welcoming Kim, one of our newest Success Coaches at Next Step to Success! Kim brings a passionate, fun, and kind spirit to our community and is deeply committed to helping students reach their full potential. Inspired by mentors who took the time to truly care, Kim believes in encouraging youth to keep going—no matter the obstacles. When she's not supporting our students, you'll find her spending time with family, appreciating great music, and leading with gratitude in everything she does. We're thrilled to have her on the NSTS team and can't wait for the impact she'll make in the lives of our youth. Let get to know her a bit more!

1. What inspired you to become a Success Coach at Next Step to Success? **I want to see the children reach their full potential**
2. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be?
Passionate, fun and kind
3. What's one lesson you hope every student you work with carries with them?
To never give up
4. Who was a mentor or role model in your own life, and how did they shape you? **Pastor – They really took the time to care**
5. What's your favorite way to spend a Saturday when you're not working?
Spending time with family
6. If you could have dinner with any historical figure or celebrity, who would it be and why? **Etta James – I love her voice**

7. What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know? **I didn't get my driver license until I was 20 years old**

8. If you had to pick a theme song for your life, what would it be? **God I am just grateful.**

9. What's the best piece of advice you've ever received? **Keep going**

10. Finish this sentence "Working at Next Step to Success means..." **Encouraging the youth for success**

11. What's your all-time favorite TV show or movie? **Fried Green Tomatoes**

We're excited to officially welcome Kim to the NSTS crew! We're grateful to have her passion, heart, and encouragement as part of our team and can't wait to see the positive impact she'll make with our students.

Culinary Corner



From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts, Chef B

Hey Family and Team,

Let's talk about what's **hitting the table** this week 😊🔥

We're serving comfort, flavor, and a little surprise to keep spirits high and bellies happy.

This Week's Lineup:

- **Monday:** Saucy Meatball Subs stacked high, paired with crisp Caesar Salad 🥗
- **Tuesday:** Flavor-packed Chicken Elote Bowls with that street-corn goodness 🌽
- **Wednesday:** Crispy Wings & Golden Wedgies — a crowd favorite every time 🍗
- **Thursday:** Hearty Beef Jambalaya simmered low and slow with bold Southern flavor 🍲
- **Friday: Breakfast for Dinner** 🍳🍷 (*shhh... don't tell too much* 😊)

As always, we're keeping one eye on the weather, so the menu may shift just a bit — but trust, the food will still be **top-tier** regardless.

Thank you for your patience, your flexibility, and the incredible push you continue to give. We see you, we appreciate you, and we're grateful for you!

With love & flavor,

Brittany "Chef B" Brown

Director of Culinary Arts | GCOAT — *Greatest Chef Of All Times* 🍳🌟

Bricks That Build Futures



For generations, the St. Vincent de Paul House has stood as a place of compassion, service, and hope in our community. Originally established as a resource for families and individuals in need, the building has long been rooted in the belief that everyone deserves dignity, support, and the opportunity to move forward. Today, that same spirit lives on through Next Step to Success, as the space continues to serve as a foundation for growth, learning, and second chances.

Through the NSTS Brick Fundraiser, we invite our community to become a permanent part of this legacy. Each engraved brick represents a name, a family, a business, or a message of encouragement—laid literally into the path of progress at the St. Vincent de Paul House. Funds raised through this campaign directly support NSTS programming, helping us provide enrichment, mentorship, and life-changing opportunities for youth and families in Norfolk.

The images below offer a preview of the engraved bricks and the location where they will be permanently installed. Bricks will be laid along the walkway at the St. Vincent de Paul House, creating a visible and lasting tribute to the individuals, families, and supporters who believe in the mission of Next Step to Success. Each brick becomes a meaningful part of the path forward, symbolizing community support and shared commitment to building brighter futures.

Your brick is more than a donation—it's a lasting symbol of belief in our mission and the people we serve. Join us in honoring the past while building the future. Purchase a brick today and leave your mark on a place where the next step toward success begins.

NEXT STEP  TO SUCCESS

BUY A BRICK



*CEMENT YOUR LEGACY &
INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION!*



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