



Next Step to Success Weekly Update

A Message from our Executive Director



James Harris

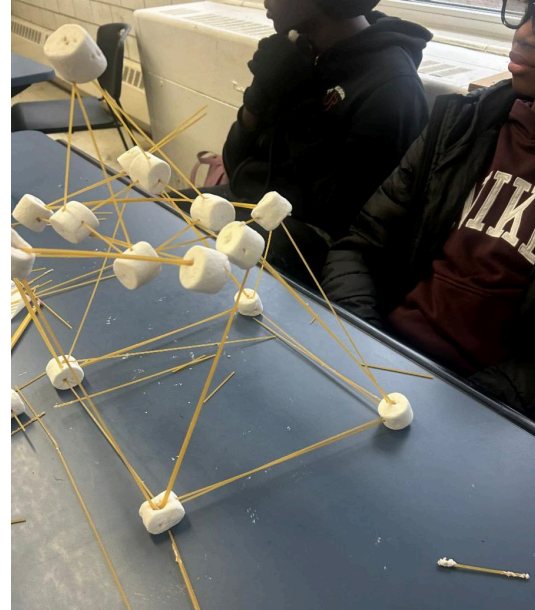
As we move into Week 22, we're excited to share that our partner *Strong Roots* is now on-site and actively working with our students, and they are loving it! The engagement, energy, and meaningful connections being built are already making a positive impact, helping students strengthen confidence, resilience, and real-world skills.

We also want to continue highlighting our Brick Fundraiser, which offers a powerful way for families, alumni, and community members to invest in our students' paths to success. By purchasing a commemorative brick through our website, you help support programming, enrichment opportunities, and the environment that allows our youth to thrive. Every brick represents belief in a student's future.

An important part of our work at NSTS is helping students set and pursue GRIT goals—goals that emphasize perseverance, responsibility, and follow-through. These goals matter because they teach students how to push through challenges and stay committed to their growth. Families are encouraged to ask, “*What is your GRIT goal?*” at home. When students receive support and encouragement from all directions school, program, and family the impact is even greater.

Thank you for being part of our village,

James Harris
Executive Director



Introducing Our Student of the Week



Mittie

Mittie is a bright, creative ninth grader who brings curiosity and quiet confidence into everything she does. Over the past year, she's grown into a thoughtful young person who shows up ready to learn, try new things, and stay true to what matters to her. Whether she's diving into an activity or sharpening a personal skill, Mittie approaches each day with intention and heart.

1. What is your name and grade? **9th – Norview High School**
2. How long have you been a part of Next Step to Success? **1 year**
3. What do you like most about coming to NSTS? **I like the activities.**
4. What is one goal you're working on right now? **Drawing better**
5. Who inspires you the most, and why? **My dad – He is my motivator**
6. What is your favorite subject in school? **Math**
7. What activities or hobbies do you enjoy outside of school? **Drawing!**
8. What's your favorite book, movie, or song right now? **Movie: Spiderverse**
9. What does success mean to you? **Being able to chase your dreams.**

10. If you could give advice to another student, what would it be? **Don't let stress get in the way of your dreams**

11. What do you see yourself doing in the future (career, dreams, or big goals)?

Becoming a professional artist and helping animals

12. Share a fun fact about yourself most people don't know! **I used to do gymnastics in elementary school**

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

14. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Funny, smart and artistic**

15. What makes you proud of yourself this week? **That I was able to practice my violin at home more than usual this week!**

As Mittie continues her journey, she's learning to balance creativity, discipline, and big dreams—without letting stress steal the spotlight. Her determination, artistic spirit, and steady motivation set her on a strong path forward, and we can't wait to see where her talents and compassion take her next.

NSTS Leadership Insights



Education Update Carly Gelles

As we move forward in the second semester, I want to encourage all students to continue working hard and staying focused on their academic goals. Attached below you will find a flyer with important information regarding financial aid support; please review them carefully and reach out if you would like assistance navigating applications or understanding available resources. This is also an important time for students to begin preparing plans for next year—whether that means finalizing steps toward graduation or thoughtfully selecting courses for the upcoming school year. Our team is here to support students through both their current academic responsibilities and future planning, and we look forward to continuing this important work together.

Best regards,

Carly Gelles
Director of Education
Next Step to Success

2025-2026 \$500 SCHOLARSHIPS

Below are three (3) separate scholarship opportunities please review carefully.

All parts of the application (application form, 250-word essay, transcripts, and letters of recommendation) MUST be received by March 15, 2026. If any part is missing from the package, it will be automatically disqualified from consideration.

Hope T. Lambert Legacy Scholarship

1. Applicants must be a female participant in the Community Outreach Coalition program.
2. Submit one letter of recommendation (high school teacher, principal, counselor, or employer).
3. Have a minimum cumulative high school GPA of 2.5.
4. Submit a high school transcript. (Unofficial transcripts are accepted)
5. Demonstrate in strong community involvement.

Dr. Kendra S. Robinson Servant Leadership Scholarship- Educational Opportunity Center Student

1. Applicants must have participated in at least one TRIO/EOC activity held by the Community Outreach Coalition.
2. Submit one letter of recommendation (high school teacher, principal, counselor, or employer).
3. Have a minimum cumulative high school or college GPA of 2.5 or a GED score of 225.
4. Submit a high school, college transcript, or GED verification. (Unofficial transcripts are accepted)

Dr. Kendra S. Robinson Servant Leadership Scholarship- Educational Talent Search Student

1. Applicants must have participated in the program for a minimum of one academic year.
2. Submit one letter of recommendation (high school teacher, principal, counselor, or employer).
3. Have a minimum cumulative high school GPA of 2.5.
4. Submit a high school transcript. (Unofficial transcripts are accepted)

**Start by registering your account. <https://cocoatransch.org/apply>. You must Register your profile in order to apply for the COC TRIO scholarship. When registering, use a permanent personal email.

**If you have any questions or need additional information, feel free to contact Shelbylyn Cantel Scholarship Chair, at 757-644-0853 or via e-mail at s.cantel@cocoatransch.org. Application form: <https://data.google.com/forms/d/1F4p4L5uP4M1N3m7r71J0N9W3k4u8n2b3g4p4F2v4p4H4A4b4>



Essay Prompt: What values guide the way you lead or support others, and how do you plan to continue to develop these values beyond high school?



Programming Update Kaelyn Hundley

This week started on a joyful note, with our well-rested youth bringing positive attitudes and uplifting energy into the program each day.

We were excited to welcome several new youth, and it was heartwarming to see their peers immediately open their arms and help them feel included. Our youth also continued building strong connections with our new coaches,

who have been hands-on in leading engaging lessons and mentoring throughout the week. We proudly began our partnership with Brighter Horizons, where the young women's group was full of smiles, laughter, and even dancing as they met the team and began their journey toward building confidence. It was a week full of connection, encouragement, and growth for everyone involved.



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

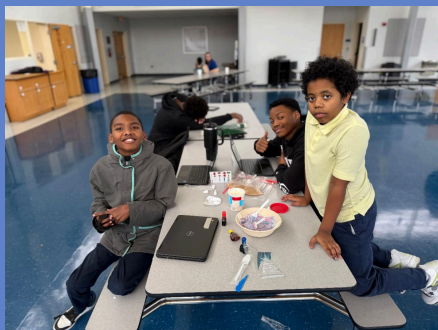
Winter Storm Safety Notification

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.

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 Intern Spotlight



Nicole

We're excited to welcome one of our newest interns to the Next Step to Success team! She brings heart, creativity, and a genuine desire to be a positive influence on the youth we serve. With a warm sense of humor, deep empathy, and a strong foundation of values shaped by family and life experience, she joins our team ready to encourage young people to believe in themselves and aim high. Meet our Intern, Nicole!

1. What inspired you to become an Intern at Next Step to Success? **I wanted to be a positive influence on the youth**

2. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Creative, empathetic and humorous**
3. What's one lesson you hope every student you work with carries with them? **That they can do anything that they put their mind to.**
4. Who was a mentor or role model in your own life, and how did they shape you? **My parents – The instilled values in me that I still use today and I pass on to my children.**
5. What's your favorite way to spend a Saturday when you're not working? **Line Dancing**
6. If you could have dinner with any historical figure or celebrity, who would it be and why? **Ilyana Van Zant – She is empowering**
7. What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know? **I was a track star – I ran for Norfolk State**
8. If you had to pick a theme song for your life, what would it be? **Motivation by TI**
9. What's the best piece of advice you've ever received? **From my dad "Always to believe in myself"**
10. Finish this sentence "Working at Next Step to Success means..." **That I can make a difference in someone's life**
11. What's your all-time favorite TV show or movie? **Sanford and Son**

From her love of line dancing to her background as a collegiate track athlete, she brings both energy and perspective to everything she does. Grounded in motivation, empowered by strong role models, and driven by a belief that everyone can achieve what they set their mind to, she embodies what it means to make a difference. We're proud to have her as part of the Next Step to Success community and can't wait to see the impact she'll make.

Culinary Corner



From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts, Chef B

Hey Next Step Family & Team,

The kitchen is **locked, loaded, and cooking with intention** next week 🍷🔥

Our youth and culinary team are bringing BIG flavor, BIG comfort, and BIG smiles to the table. Here's what's coming off the line:

🍗 **Monday – Chicken Wraps**

Warm, seasoned chicken wrapped up tight with all the goodness. Simple, satisfying, and full of flavor.

🌮 **Tuesday – TACO TUESDAY (Beef or Chicken!)**

You already know... juicy, seasoned protein, bold taco flavors, and that “*just one more*” energy.

🍗🍟 **Wednesday – Wings & Wedges**

Crispy wings. Golden potato wedges. Enough said. This one speaks for itself 😞

🍔 **Thursday – Pulled BBQ Sandwiches with Mac & Cheese**

Slow, saucy BBQ piled high on a soft bun, paired with creamy mac & cheese. Comfort food doing what it does BEST.

🍳🍞 **Friday – Breakfast Sandwiches & Fresh Fruit**

A cozy, feel-good way to wrap the week—hot breakfast sandwiches with fresh fruit on the side to start the day right.

As always, everything is prepared with **care, consistency, and love for our youth** ❤️

Thank you for the continued support—you already know the kitchen stays busy and the plates stay full!

With flavor & gratitude,

Brittany "Chef B" Brown

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

Bricks That Build Futures



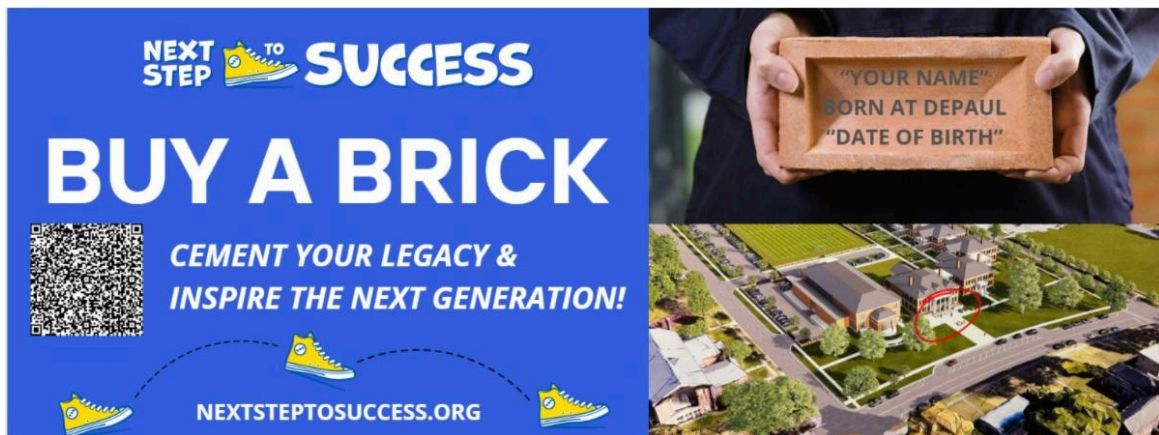
For generations, the St. Vincent de Paul House has stood as a place of compassion, service, and hope in our community. Originally established as a resource for families and individuals in need, the building has long been rooted in the belief that everyone deserves dignity, support, and the opportunity 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.



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