



Next Step to Success Weekly Update



A Message from our Executive Director



James Harris

As we move into Week 34, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported Next Step to Success during our presentation with United Way and Women United this week. We were honored to present our proposed initiative, H.E.R. - Healthy, Educated, and Resilient Young Women. This program is designed to empower young women through mentorship, wellness, leadership development, and academic support while helping them build the confidence and resilience needed to thrive.

We also want to encourage all students currently enrolled in NSTS to continue attending consistently and finishing the school year strong. Daily participation remains one of the most important factors in student growth and success.

In addition, NSTS is now offering afternoon tours of our facility. We invite families, community members, and supporters to come visit, meet our incredible Student Ambassadors, and experience firsthand the positive environment being created for Norfolk's youth.

Finally, our Buy a Brick Fundraiser continues to gain momentum. Each brick purchased represents a lasting investment in our students and a visible reminder that our community believes in their future.

Thank you for continuing to stand with NSTS and support the next generation of leaders.

James Harris, Executive Director

Student of the Week: Meet Korey!



We are so excited to shine our spotlight this week on a young man who embodies what Next Step to Success is all about! Korey is a 9th grader at Norview High School and is wrapping up his second year with NSTS. In just that short time, he has grown into someone who carries himself with a quiet strength and a clear sense of who he is. From

the boxing ring to the basketball court, Korey shows up every day ready to engage, grow, and be part of our community. We sat down with him this week to learn a little more about what makes him tick — and we think you are going to love what he had to say!

1. What is your school and grade? **Norview HS – 9th Grade**
2. How long have you been a part of Next Step to Success? **This is my second year.**
3. What do you like most about coming to NSTS? **Boxing and Basketball... I also love the food.**
4. What is one goal you're working on right now? **Getting a summer job.**
5. Who inspires you the most, and why? **My boxing coach – I like how he overcame being bullied.**
6. What is your favorite subject in school? **Math**
7. What activities or hobbies do you enjoy outside of school? **Basketball**
8. What's your favorite book, movie, or song? **Movie – Friday**
9. What does success mean to you? **Being peaceful in your own space.**
10. If you could give advice to another student, what would it be? **Stay true to yourself.**
11. What do you see yourself doing in the future (career, dreams, or big goals)? **I want to design sneakers.**
12. Share a fun fact about yourself most people don't know! **I like cats.**
13. Is there someone at NSTS (staff or peer) who has made a big difference for you? **The boxing coach, Coach Robert.**
14. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Calm, peaceful and determined**
15. What makes you proud of yourself this week? **That I have not gotten angry.**

Korey, we are so incredibly proud of the young man you are becoming. Your words — calm, peaceful, and determined — say it all. The fact that you are actively working toward your goals, staying true to yourself, and finding peace in your own space at just 15 years old is something truly special. Next Step to Success is better because you are here, and we cannot wait to see you designing those sneakers one day! Keep being exactly who you are. 🏀 ✨

NSTS in Action — Pitching for Purpose & Making Our Mark!

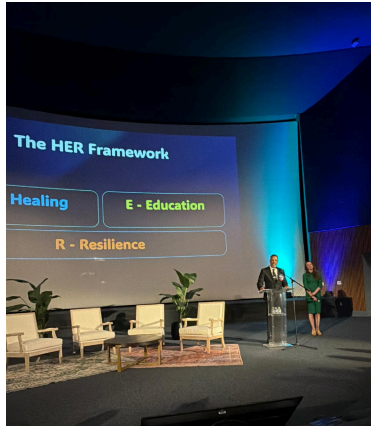
This Wednesday evening was a milestone moment for Next Step to Success! We are incredibly proud to share that NSTS was selected as one of only three finalists out of 30 organizations that applied to present our vision for the HER — Healing, Education, and Resilience — Program before a panel of community leaders and supporters. The HER Program is designed to bring healing and resilience-based programming directly inside our public schools, meeting our youth right where they are. Being chosen as a finalist is a tremendous honor and a powerful testament to the vision, dedication, and hard work of our entire team.

We were competing for a \$100,000 grant that would allow us to bring the HER Program to life in a meaningful and lasting way — and we gave it everything we had! While we were named a runner-up, we are absolutely thrilled to announce that Next Step to Success has been awarded a \$12,500 unrestricted grant! This funding goes directly toward supporting the mission and work of NSTS, and we could not be more grateful for this incredible investment in our organization.

A heartfelt thank you to Women United and United Way of South Hampton Roads for creating this opportunity and for their unwavering commitment to investing in programs that uplift women and children right here in our community. We are honored, we are grateful, and we are just getting started! 🙏🎉



An unforgettable evening at Nauticus in Norfolk! The Women United Pitch for a Purpose event brought together over 125 community leaders and supporters from across Hampton Roads and the Commonwealth of Virginia to invest in meaningful change. Next Step to Success was proud to be in the room!



Our very own James Harris and Carly Gelles taking the stage to present The HER Framework — Healing, Education, and Resilience to the panel! With just 7 minutes to make their case, these two knocked it out of the park, passionately sharing the vision and efficacy of the HER Program and why it is the perfect extension of the work we do every day at Next Step to Success. We could not be more proud!



One of the most powerful moments of the evening came when our Director of Education, Carly Gelles, shared the transformation story of our very own Taylor as one of Next Step to Success's greatest success stories. Taylor, who will be graduating this May and heading to Tidewater Community College to study Social Work, was brave enough to be in the room as her journey was shared before 125 community leaders and supporters. Her presence alone spoke volumes! Taylor, thank you for your bravery and for representing the program you love so beautifully. You are the reason we do what we do, and we could not be more proud of the young woman you have become!

NSTS Leadership Insights



Carly Gelles
Director of Education

It's hard to believe, but there are only 3 weeks left in the school year! As we head into the final stretch, we want to encourage all students to stay focused, stay present, and continue putting forth their best effort each day.

Make-up SOL testing will take place next week, so please make sure your student is attending school consistently and not missing any remaining testing requirements. Finishing strong now can make a big difference heading into the summer and next school year.

We also know this time of year can feel overwhelming for students and families alike. If your child needs any additional academic support, encouragement, or help navigating this final push, please don't hesitate to reach out. We will continue checking in with students daily and doing everything we can to support them through the end of the school year.

Thank you, as always, for your continued partnership and support!



Kaelyn Hundley
Director of Programming

This week at Next Step to Success was a wonderful reminder of why we do what we do — and the incredible village that surrounds our youth every single day!

Our partners continued showing up in a big way this week. Several of our students dove into exciting new projects with Andie Paint, where they are designing and building their very own birdhouses. Watching our youth explore their creativity through hands-on activities has been truly inspiring, and we are so grateful for partners who bring these kinds of enriching experiences directly to our kids.

Behind the scenes, we have also been busy laying the groundwork for an exciting summer ahead. This week brought meaningful conversations with some incredible community partners as we continue building a summer program that is filled with opportunities for our youth to learn, grow, and thrive. We are so grateful for the relationships and collaborations that make Next Step to Success the special place that it is.

As always, none of this would be possible without the continued support of our community, our donors, and our dedicated partners. Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of our young people — and the best is yet to come!

 **Summer 2026!**

Thanks to the incredible support of our families and community, the Next Step to Success Summer Program is now fully enrolled! This is such a milestone moment for our organization and a true reflection of the trust our community has placed in us — and we do not take that lightly.

This summer is shaping up to be our best one yet! Our youth will enjoy a jam-packed season filled with engaging daily programming, hands-on learning experiences, and exciting field trips that will take them beyond our walls and out into the world around them. From exploring new places to building new skills, our goal is to make sure every young person in our program spends their summer growing, laughing, learning, and creating memories that will last a lifetime. We have been busy behind the scenes planning an experience that is as enriching as it is fun — and we cannot wait to share it all with you!

At this time, all new applications will be placed on our waitlist. As openings become available, families will be contacted in the order in which applications were received.

We are truly grateful for the overwhelming interest in our program. It is a testament to the strength of this community and our shared commitment to the success of our youth.

 To join the waitlist or for any questions, please contact: Muhanma Ernesto García, Director of Operations  (757) 404-1818  mgarcia@nextstepstosuccess.org

Thank you for believing in the mission of Next Step to Success. This summer is going to be something truly special — stay tuned! 

JOIN US FOR SUMMER 2026!
For Youth Ages 13–18
3401 Tidewater Dr. • Norfolk, VA 23509
(757) 995-2111

 Scan to Apply Now!

NEXT STEP SUCCESS
Summer 2026

Your Summer Starts Here!
Beginning June 15th, youth will embark on an exciting 8-week summer experience designed to challenge, inspire, and empower them to become confident leaders.

What Your Camper Can Expect:

- Daily transportation to and from home
- Breakfast, Snack & Lunch included
- Transportation Pick-up begins at 8:00 AM
- Camp programming: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

GRIT • GROWTH MINDSET • OPTIMISM • SUCCESS • COMMUNITY SERVICE • AGENCY

From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts, Chef B



THIS WEEK'S

CONFIDENCE CAFE

MENU

GOOD FOOD. GOOD VIBES. STRONGER FUTURES. WE EAT. WE THRIVE!

#HowYouEating

MONDAY

SALMON
(SUB CHICKEN)
GREEN BEANS & RICE

TUESDAY

WALKING TACOS & CHURRO'S

WEDNESDAY

WINGS & WEDGES
& CINNAMON ROLLS

THURSDAY

CALZONES & SALAD
& SUGAR COOKIES

FRIDAY

CHILLI DOGS & WEDGES

YOUTH FAVE!
BOMB POPS

THANK YOU
FOR BEING PART OF OUR CONFIDENCE CAFE FAMILY!

LET'S EAT, LAUGH & GROW TOGETHER!

#HOW YOU EATING

Save the Date — NSTS End of Year Celebration & Start of Summer Cookout!



We want to see ALL of your beautiful faces on Thursday, May 29th at 3:30 PM as we come together to celebrate the end of an incredible school year and kick off summer in the best way possible — with good food, great people, and amazing youth! 🎉

Join us for an afternoon full of fun as we show off our students' incredible creativity at our Art Showcase, and get competitive with Cornhole, Can Jam, Jenga, and Connect Four. The highlight of the day will be a very special recognition ceremony honoring our graduating seniors as they take their next big step, as well as our outstanding Students of the Week who have gone above and beyond throughout the year. We are so proud of each and every one of them!

This is also a wonderful opportunity for families to meet the incredible community partners who walk alongside our youth every single day — the people, organizations, and programs that make Next Step to Success the special place it is. Come put a face to the names you have been hearing about all year!

This is a celebration for our entire NSTS family — students, families, staff, partners, and friends. You do not want to miss it!

Click the image above to RSVP by Sunday, May 25th. We cannot wait to celebrate with you!

From DePaul's Legacy to the Next Generation's Future

NEXT STEP TO SUCCESS

BUY A BRICK!

CEMENT YOUR LEGACY & INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION!



LEAVE YOUR MARK.
Support Next Step to Success and have your personalized brick become a lasting part of our foundation.

**JERRY FITZGERALD
BORN AT DEPAUL
MARCH 25, 1985**

**ORDER YOUR BRICK TODAY!
NEXTSTEPTOSUCCESS.ORG**

Were You Born at the Historic DePaul Hospital?

For generations, DePaul Hospital was more than just a building—it was where families began, where first breaths were taken, and where lifelong stories started. If you or someone you love has a connection to DePaul, this is your opportunity to honor that legacy in a meaningful and lasting way.

Next Step to Success is proud to carry that history forward as we transform this space into a place where young people can grow, learn, and build their futures. By purchasing a commemorative brick, you become a permanent part of this next chapter—celebrating the past while investing in the future of our youth.

Each brick tells a story. Each name becomes part of the foundation.

Don't let your story be left out. Claim your place today!

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