



## *Next Step to Success Weekly Update*



### **A Message from our Executive Director**

Dear NSTS Families and Community,

I am incredibly proud to share some exciting leadership news that reflects the continued growth, strength, and vision of our organization. These changes are effective June 28, 2026, and I believe each one positions Next Step to Success to better serve our youth, our families, and our mission for years to come.

**Muhanmna Ernesto García — Director of Strategic Growth, Partnerships & Youth Engagement**

Muhanmna steps into a senior leadership role that sits at the intersection of strategy and service. In this position, he will lead our efforts in enrollment growth, attendance and retention, youth engagement, and community partnerships — always keeping young people and families at the center of every decision. Muhanmna brings the relational depth and strategic vision this role demands, and I have full confidence in the impact he will make.

**Katy Rock — Director of Development**

Katy Rock has been promoted from within to serve as our Director of Development — and this is exactly the kind of moment that reminds me why investing in our people matters. Katy's time at NSTS has given her a genuine understanding of who we are, what we stand for, and what it takes to sustain this work. In her new role, she will lead our fundraising strategy, grow and steward relationships with donors and funders, oversee grant prospecting and reporting, pursue corporate sponsorships, and work closely with me and the Board to ensure our financial foundation is strong enough to match our vision. This promotion is a testament to her dedication, and I could not be more confident in her leadership.

**Jontel Evans — Administrative Manager, Operations & Culinary Department**

Jontel Evans has been promoted to Administrative Manager, with oversight of all operational functions at NSTS including our Culinary Department. This promotion recognizes what those of us who work alongside Jontel already know — he brings exceptional care, reliability, and quiet leadership to everything he touches. In his expanded role, Jontel will help ensure our day-to-day operations run with the efficiency and intentionality our mission requires.

These are not simply title changes — they are strategic investments in the future of Next Step to Success. Each of these individuals embodies the Six Pillars we strive to instill in our scholars every day, and I am grateful beyond measure to work alongside them.

Please join me in congratulating Muhanmna, Katy, and Jontel as they step into these exciting new chapters of leadership!

James Harris  
Executive Director Next Step to Success



## Community Partner Highlights — Week 2

We are only a few weeks into Summer 2026 and the feedback from our community partners has been nothing short of incredible — a true reflection of the energy, curiosity, and heart our youth bring to everything they do.

Our friends at Circle A Home for Horses shared that this has been the best start yet in our three years of partnering together. Watching our youth connect with the horses, step outside their comfort zones, and light up in that environment is something truly special — and hearing that from our partners makes it even more meaningful.

This week, our youth had the opportunity to visit Paradise Creek in Portsmouth with the Elizabeth River Project as part of our major off-site programming. Youth participated in bird watching, identified native plants, and learned about watershed conservation and ways to improve water quality right here in our community. These are the kinds of experiences that open eyes, spark curiosity, and remind our young people that the world is so much bigger than what they see every day.

And the great news keeps coming — guitar lessons continue to be a tremendous success! When surveyed, participating youth rated the experience between 8 and 9 out of 10. Instructor Joaquin Garza shared how much he has enjoyed working with our youth and expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity NSTS provides for young people to learn new skills and explore new interests.

This is what summer at NSTS looks like — new places, new skills, and new possibilities. We are so proud of our youth and incredibly grateful for the partners who make it all possible!

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## Summer 2026 — We're Just Getting Started!

Dear NSTS Families,

Summer Program 2026 is officially underway and we are two weeks in — and what a start it has been! We are thrilled to share that this summer marks record-breaking enrollment for NSTS, with 130 youth joining us for the season. Even more exciting — our first two weeks of programming have brought record attendance, with our youth showing up ready to connect, learn, and have fun every single day!

As we continue to grow, we want to take a moment to thank our families for their patience, flexibility, and grace. Every day we are welcoming new students into our program, and our Success Coaches are working hard to make sure each pickup and drop-off runs as smoothly as possible. As routes are adjusted and new faces join us daily, we truly appreciate your understanding as we get everyone settled in. Your support does not go unnoticed, and we are so grateful for the trust you continue to place in NSTS.

Seeing our youth show up day after day, building friendships, trying new things, and diving into all that this summer has to offer has truly set the tone for what is shaping up to be our best summer yet. From hands-on workshops to exciting field trips and incredible community partnerships, our Success Coaches are giving everything they have to make sure every day is filled with purpose, fun, and growth.

As always, if you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to reach out — we are here for you and your family every step of the way.

Thank you for being part of the NSTS family. Here's to an amazing summer ahead!

Muhamna Garcia

Director of Strategic Growth, Partnerships & Youth Engagement

Next Step to Success

## Good Food. Good Mood. Chef B's Got You Covered!

**CONFIDENCE CAFÉ**  
EAT GOOD FEEL GOOD  
SUMMER MENU OF THE WEEK  
FUEL YOUR BODY • FEED YOUR FUTURE • LEVEL UP!

**MONDAY**  
BREAKFAST: CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST  
LUNCH: CHICKEN SANDWICHES, CRISPY WEDGES

**TACO TUESDAY**  
BREAKFAST: LOADED HASH, BROWN BOWLS  
LUNCH: WALKING TACOS, CHURROS

**WING WEDNESDAY**  
BREAKFAST: CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST  
LUNCH: WINGS & WEDGES, ICE CREAM TREATS  
- THE MOST ANTICIPATED DAY OF THE WEEK! -

**THURSDAY FEAST**  
BREAKFAST: PANCAKES & SAUSAGE  
LUNCH: CHICKEN TENDERS, MAC & CHEESE, BROWNIES

**NO PROGRAM FRIDAY**  
ENJOY THE JULY 4TH HOLIDAY!

**CONFIDENCE CAFÉ CREW RULES**  
COME HUNGRY • BE RESPECTFUL • TRY SOMETHING NEW • CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF • BRING POSITIVE ENERGY

**GOOD FOOD. GOOD MOOD. GOOD DAY!**  
#HowYouEating CONFIDENCE CAFÉ NSTS SUMMER PROGRAM CHEF B'S KITCHEN

## NSTS Leadership Insights



**Carly Gelles**  
**Director of Education**

Dear NSTS Families,

As we move into Week 2 of Summer 2026, I want to take a moment to shine a spotlight on the people who make everything possible every single day — our Success Coaches.

Our coaches are the heartbeat of this program. From the moment they begin picking up youth in the morning to the time they drop them off at the end of the day, they are fully invested in making sure every young person in our care feels seen, supported, and excited to be here. It is not easy work — and they show up for it every single day with energy, patience, and genuine love for our youth.

This summer, our coaches have taken the lead in expanding off-site learning opportunities and field trips in a bold new way. Rather than organizing large group outings, they have embraced a smaller group model — leading more personalized, intimate experiences that allow them to connect more deeply with the youth in their groups. This approach means our coaches are not just chaperones — they are active participants and guides, walking the trails at Paradise Creek, learning alongside our youth at Circle A Home for Horses, cheering them on at Top Golf, and sitting in on guitar lessons to support and encourage every step of the way.

Our coaches are also the first to notice when a student is having a hard day, the first to celebrate a small victory, and the first to build the kind of trust that makes young people feel safe enough to try new things. That kind of relationship cannot be programmed or scheduled — it is built one interaction at a time, and our coaches do it beautifully.

We are so incredibly proud of our team, and we hope you feel as grateful as we do for the dedicated individuals who pour so much of themselves into this work each and every day. If you see a Success Coach, please know that they are one of the biggest reasons your child is having an amazing summer.

Thank you for trusting us — and them — with your young people.

Carly Gelles  
Director of Education  
Next Step to Success

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**Kaelyn Hundley**  
**Director of Programming**

As we continue our summer program, I want to send a few important reminders to help ensure all youth have a safe and enjoyable experience.

- **Dress for Success:** With temperatures continuing to rise, please encourage your youth to dress appropriately for the weather. Many of our activities take place outdoors, and wearing sweatshirts and jeans every day can lead to discomfort and overheating. Lightweight clothing, athletic wear, and comfortable closed-toe shoes are recommended so youth can fully participate in activities and stay cool throughout the day.
- **Medication Reminder:** Please make sure your youth brings any necessary medications with them each day and that our staff is aware of what medication they are carrying. For example, several youth have shared that they have asthma and use inhalers, but they did not have their inhalers with them during program hours. As a summer camp, our youth are active throughout the day. Some groups participate in sports such as soccer and basketball, while others enjoy outdoor field games and recreational activities. Having necessary medications available is essential for your child's health and safety.

Thank you for helping us create a fun, safe, and successful summer experience for all youth! We are proud to see our youth staying active, building friendships, exploring their community, and developing the skills they need for future success.

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

# WERE YOU BORN AT DEPAUL HOSPITAL?

Your story started here. Now, help write the next chapter.

Then



Our Future




From a Legacy of *care...* To where *futures* are built.

 **HONOR THE PAST.  
INVEST IN THE FUTURE.**

Purchase a commemorative brick and be part of transforming the historic DePaul Hospital site into the future home of Next Step to Success.

 Leave a Lasting Legacy

 Honor a Loved One or Family

 Support Norfolk's Youth



SCAN TO

**BUY YOUR  
BRICK  
Today!**



**NEXT  
STEP**  **TO  
SUCCESS**



**St. Vincent de Paul House**  
Future Home of Next Step to Success

## Were You Born at the Historic DePaul Hospital?

For generations, DePaul Hospital was more than 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 historic 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 Norfolk's youth.

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

**Honor your DePaul story. Invest in their future. Purchase your commemorative brick today.**

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