

NextStep

LEARNING CENTER

GRADUATION: CELEBRATING A JOURNEY

The graduates wore caps and gowns, families waved congratulatory signs, and “Pomp and Circumstance” played over the loud speakers as the class of 2017 marched in. In many ways it looked like a high school anywhere, yet the commencement ceremony at Next Step Learning Center was a little different than others. For these students, the journey to graduation had more road blocks, more obstacles, and more triumphs than most.

Sister Joan Doyle, one of Next Step’s board members, was in the audience that sunny afternoon in July. She recalls:

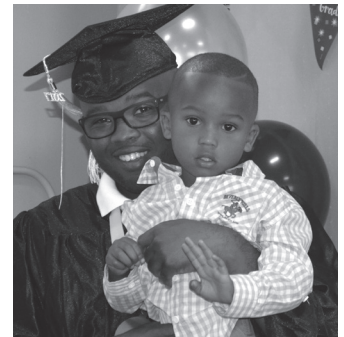
An air of anticipation and excitement was evident in the Sacred Heart auditorium as the crowd gathered. I watched with joy and amazement as these men and women walked proudly to the stage. I knew that there was a story to be told about each one of these precious students. I was moved with admiration and gratitude for them and for the courage they displayed in making the journey to this day. I feel richly blessed to be part of this extraordinary place called Next Step.

Between July, 2016 and June, 2017, some

47 Next Step students graduated with a high school diploma or equivalency certificate and nine more completed in July, bringing the total number of graduates honored at the ceremony to an impressive 56. Many had dreamed about this moment for a very long time. Ivan Speed received his high school diploma after a decade of study. “I was shot in the head and had to learn most things all over again,” he shared. Having started his studies in jail, Ivan continued at Next Step upon his release. “It is good to finally make my family proud,” he said. “Good to give my son something to look up to. They waited a long time for me to turn things around, and I did.”

Rituals are important. Missing out on graduation the first time makes this ritual all the more important when it ultimately happens. Reflecting on the days after the ceremony, graduate Miguel Binion stated, “This week felt different. I think I had been carrying a lot of shame about being a drop out that I didn’t notice until now. A weight has been lifted.”

Pictured: (Clockwise) Rebecca Peterson; Ivan Speed with his son; Van, My and Nhi To; Erica McKissick; Mariah Chavez and Miguel Binion; Dymin Willims



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

The Faces and Voices of Next Step

PROGRAM DIRECTOR: PEGGY PRESLEY

It's a blessing to come to work at Next Step each day. Next Step is a welcoming oasis of light and learning where transformation and growth happens on a daily basis (academically, emotionally, and socially) because of the commitment of tutors and staff. The students who try to create a better life for themselves are like caterpillars emerging from their cocoons and becoming beautiful butterflies. There is an African Proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child"; I would add that it also takes a village to educate them.



TUTOR: LISA MANOLIUS

I volunteer as a tutor because I want to help empower people. Education is one of the best, most potent ways to do that. I know that from personal experience; reading and writing saved me from an extremely destructive family situation.

Next Step is unique and special in two ways: One, the staff and tutors are nonjudgmental and absolutely committed to helping our students learn and succeed; two, our students have determination and dedication to their education,

often amidst huge personal challenges and obstacles. I learn something new just about every day I come to Next Step! This work is so very rewarding as well as humbling in the best of ways.



BOARD CHAIR: GREG SCHOPF

Watching the graduation, I felt proud of them [the students] and inspired by their courage and dedication.

I am proud of the very positive and transforming impact that Next Step is making in the lives of individuals as well as the broader statement of care, confidence and responsibility Next Step is making in the entire Oakland community.



TEACHER: NANCY SKOWBO

Nancy is our new high school diploma teacher, assigned to Next Step from Five Keys Charter School. She has taught English in various school districts and has worked as a Reading Intervention Specialist at the K-5 level.



Nancy's reflections on the job so far: There are many reasons why a person's education is interrupted. Adult education offers a chance to fill the gap; a "do-over," if you will. Having that opportunity is hugely important for adult learners. It's exciting to me to be a part of this phase of their journey.

There is a strong supportive atmosphere at Next Step, which feels like a home. I love watching the camaraderie among the students, and the Next Step tutors are fabulous! Their dedication to the students is amazing. I've been pleased to meet with several tutors one-on-one to discuss progress or plans for a specific student. They have helped me to understand how I can best support them, as THEY support the students. Because I believe that success breeds success, I am hopeful that next year's graduating class is even larger than this year's!



NEXT STEP GRADUATE: CLAY POXON

Why did you leave high school? It all started in 8th grade—when I realized I sucked at math—and it went downhill from there. I got kicked out. I was selling drugs.

How did you find Next Step? I heard about Next Step through my parents. When I went there, it was all good right off the bat. I had to take two buses in the morning, wake up at 6:30, but it was

all worth it. I remember starting to learn right on the first day. I like the 1-on-1 tutoring—that was a really good part of the program.

There were no distractions, I could pay attention. You can get along with pretty much everyone there!

What was graduation day like for you? Oh wow, I am not built for a gown, just no... but I remember the speeches, people were crying, it was nothing but a positive situation. I always had to watch my friends get on the honor roll. I would be in the audience while they were the ones on the stage. So that day, I was finally the one going up to the stage.

What are you doing now? Now, I'm in the construction business. I attend paid on-the-job training. I'm planning on college next year. I want to get on my feet first, get a steady paycheck. [Clay continues to study with the Next Step teacher at YEP to prepare for college]

Do you have any advice for others who have dropped out and are returning to school? Persevere, don't give up, even if it seems really, really hard, how low your grades are, just don't give up.



Computers for Students

Tutor and student: Roxanne & Ildelisa

Ildelisa, a Next Step college student, shows off her new computer. The laptop is one of eight generously donated from Honson Lee, Roxanne's neighbor. Mr. Lee refurbishes used lap tops, and then gifts them to us. Next Step college students without a computer put them to good use! On behalf of the recipients of the computers and all of us at Next Step, we express our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Lee and the other computer donors, such as Charlie Blumenthal and Greg Govan.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE AN EDUCATION MAKES

Catching up with former Next Step GED graduates



NAWANG LOBZANG CLASS OF 2012

After studying in monasteries along the India-Tibet border, Nawang traveled as an interpreter and representative for his monastery. Nawang dreamed of a Western education and landed at Next Step as

a recent immigrant to the US. In spite of having difficulty with English (his third language) and an injury resulting in a significant loss of vision, he studied hard, achieved his GED, and transitioned to Laney College. From there he went on to U.C. Davis and is graduating this fall with a B.A. in Philosophy—8 years after enrolling at Next Step!

"I'm applying to graduate schools next. My goal has always been to attain a scholarly education so I can better share what I learned in the monastery and have the understanding to learn from others."



MICHAEL SMITH CLASS OF 2014

Michael Smith began his journey with Next Step in 2012. A lack of home stability affected his elementary education through high school. The day Michael enrolled he was homeless with no job. An avid student who likes to learn for knowledge's sake, he committed himself and completed the G.E.D. Michael went on to the College of Alameda in 2014, stayed at a local shelter, and completed the Atlas Forklift and Warehouse Operations certificate. He has worked in the field ever since and lives in his own place. Always looking for new opportunities, Michael just started truck driving school with a company that guarantees a well-paying job upon completion.

"I am thankful. Next Step allowed me to form ambitions and make better decisions with my life...to move toward whatever I want to conquer."



NEXT STEP'S



FOWAZ A.



L'KENDRA A.



ENRIQUE A.



MIGUEL B.



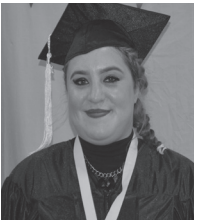
MARIAH C.



PAULETTE D.



GRECIA E.



MELISSA G.



SYLVIANA H.



ALBERT H.



DENAIRO J.



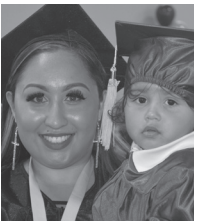
ANDREA L.



DESTINY L.



JUSTIN L.



ALEXANDRA L.



ALFREDO L.



RAVEN L.



JAMES M.



ERICA M.



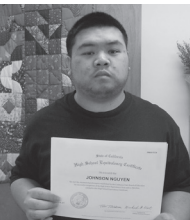
SHANNON M.



ASHLEY N.



ADIA N.



JOHNSON N.



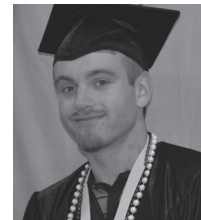
ELIZABETH O.



ALYSIA O.



IRENE P.



CLAY P.



REBECCA P.

NATIONAL ADULT HONOR SOCIETY HONOREES

The National Adult Honor Society recognizes outstanding students for their attendance, participation, personal growth and commitment to education. These exceptional Next Step students were inducted into the society at graduation.



MELDA B.



ANDREA M.



ARIANNA J.



CYNTHIA P.



RAYMOND N.



RESONJA W.



JOANNE G.

CLASS OF 2017!



ALLEN J.



JACK B.



JOSHUA L.



JAZMYRN P.



ALYSHA R.



DAIVEN R.



JORDAN S.



J'VOHN S.



IVAN S.



MY T.



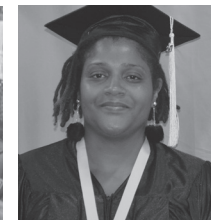
VAN T.



DYMIN W.



XAVIER W.



TASHONIA W.

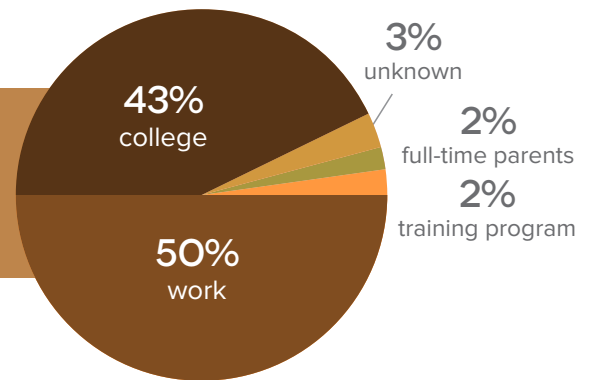


ALAINA W.

GRADUATES NOT PICTURED:

COREY B., HECTOR B., ALONZO B., PEARL C., LAKESHA C., ABELINO C., CHRISTIAN G., LAMAR H., TREVOR K., JULIO P., IMANE J., DARREN Z.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

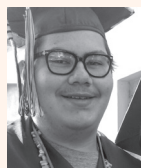


COLLEGE GRADUATES!



Zahra B.
Merritt College
Certificate in Early Child Dev.

TODAY:
Working full time and continuing college



Quinton C.
Merritt College:
Associate's Degree

TODAY:
Attends UC Davis



Nathaniel H.
Laney College
Certificate in Video and Audio Production

TODAY:
Continuing study towards A.A. and working



De'Jauna H.
Merritt College
Certificate in Early Child Dev.

TODAY:
Continuing study towards A.A.



Denairo J.
Merritt College/
East Bay Fire Academy:
EMT Diploma

TODAY:
Continuing study towards paramedic certificate



Cha'Shonn T.
Merritt College:
Associate's Degree

TODAY:
Attends SF State



Audra T.
Laney College:
Certificate of IGETZ

TODAY:
Continuing study towards three A.A. degrees!



Ildelisa V.
Merritt College
Certificate in Early Childhood Dev.

TODAY:
Working full time and continuing college



William S.
Merritt College:
Associate's Degree

TODAY:
Attends SF State

YEAR IN REVIEW

The Next Step Program from July 2016 to June 2017

TOTAL STUDENTS SERVED: 452

213

Individual GED or HiSET sub tests passed



CYNTHIA P.

Passed three of her 5 HiSET tests

132

grade-level gains in reading and math



ANDREA M.

Who advanced from 11th to 12th grade in the diploma program this year

47

high school graduates (diploma, GED or HiSET)



JAMES M.

Pictured with his delighted parents on graduation day

On behalf of the staff and students of Next Step Learning Center, we extend our deep gratitude to all the volunteers, board members, and investors who make this important work possible.

51

job placements



IRENE P.

Working full time since graduating in 2017

9

college graduates



WILLIAM S.

Graduated with an A.A. from Merritt College and now attends SF State

54

students enrolling or continuing in college



QUINTON AND CHA'SHONN

Both graduated with their A.A.s from Merritt College and now attend UC Davis and SF State respectively

ANNUAL BUDGET

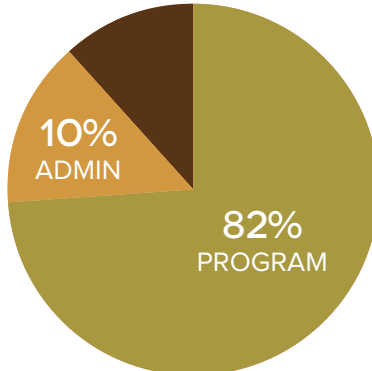
\$699,000

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS THAT GO DIRECTLY TO THE PROGRAM

100%

USE OF BUDGET

8% FUNDRAISING



ANNUAL COST PER STUDENT

\$14,543

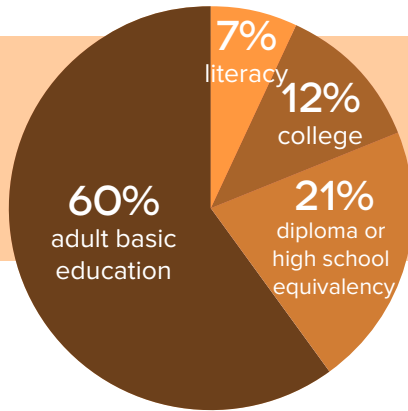
OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

\$1,546

NEXT STEP



READING LEVELS OF STUDENTS



All Next Step students are assessed at intake to determine their proficiency in reading comprehension. The results are broken into three levels:

- Literacy: ≤ 4th grade equivalent
- Adult Basic Education: 4th to 8th grade reading
- Diploma or High School Equivalency: 8th to 12th grade level

Next Step students who are now in college are shown in the “college” section on the chart.

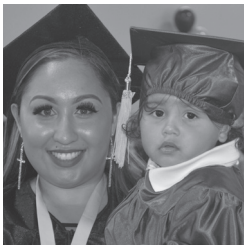
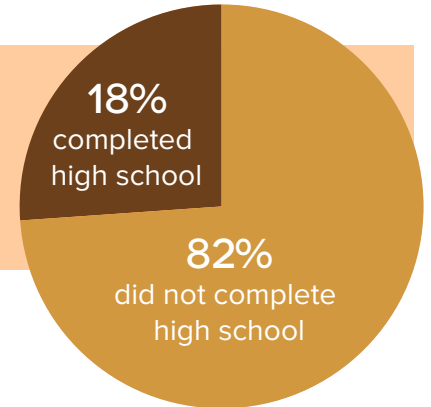


JESUS

Jesus passed his first HiSET test and continues to study while taking an introductory college class with a Next Step cohort. He wants to set an example for his brothers to graduate and go college.

“Every time I leave Next Step I feel good because I have accomplished something.”

EDUCATION OF STUDENTS’ PARENTS

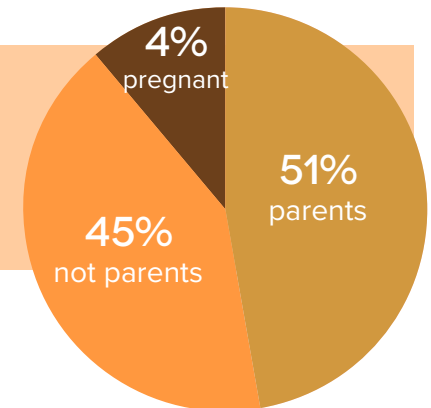


ALEX AND A.J.

Alex graduated with her diploma in July. Since then she has moved into permanent housing and is now in a training program.

“I graduated with my son in my arms—I did this for us.”

PARENTAL STATUS OF STUDENTS



MELDA, AGE: 61

Melda is well on her way to completing her HiSET.

“I dropped out, went to work, got married and had kids. Now it’s my turn. This is something I have to do for myself.”

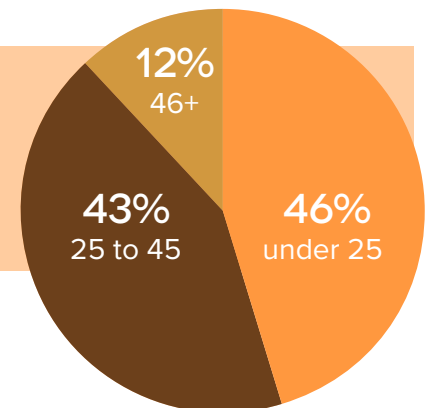


DEJANAY, AGE: 19

Dejanay studies hard every day as she strives to complete her high school diploma.

“I have goals. My goal to become a nurse and God are what motivate me.”

AGES OF STUDENTS





2222 CURTIS ST.
OAKLAND, CA 94607
510-251-1731



OUR FOUNDERS REFLECT ON GRADUATION



"I was filled with joy and gratitude as I experienced this awe-inspiring gathering of the community that is Next Step: courageous, determined, resilient students and their proud families; dedicated, caring, and highly talented staff; and extraordinarily generous volunteers, donors, and

Board members. I am most proud that the culture of welcome, respect, and belief in the full potential of each person who enters Next Step's doorway—that culture makes Next Step the special place it has been since 1994 and means it continues to flourish!"

—Cynthia Canning, SNJM



"I was so inspired to celebrate these students whose graduation was due to their dedication, determination, and persistence combined with Next Step's welcoming environment and individualized academic enrichment through our supportive staff and tutors—a spirit of joy radiated in

each student. I am filled with gratitude that Lisa, Executive Director, staff, volunteer tutors, Board, and all supporters of Next Step have continued to nurture its individualized, caring, and supportive culture while expanding into additional creative avenues of educational opportunities that provide new resources for Next Step students to continue on their life changing journeys."

—Rosemary Delaney, SNJM

