The “Show Your Tenacity” Gala
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AmeriCorps: Stories of Service  
By: Joanne Esteban, Dever-McCormack Middle School

In December, Tenacity hosted its annual “Rising Stars Tournament” which introduced 6th graders to competitive tennis play. The McCormack Middle School (DMC) had four 6th-graders competing in two different brackets. One of the teams, Marvin B. and Kathy P., ended up making it to the finals in their bracket. In a close race, the other team, Zhilee C. and Brendan W., ended up barely missing the finals by a couple of games.

In the finals, Marvin and Kathy nervously began playing in a close match against the Curley team with the DMC staff in the stands watching like proud parents. I was on the court helping umpire when I noticed Zhilee sitting all by himself on the other side of the stands. I quietly asked another staff member to go and check on him.

The staff member and Zhilee sat there for a while, not watching any of the games. Meanwhile, Marvin and Kathy were neck and neck with the Curley team, with all four players intensely concentrating on the points. When there was a break, I ran up to the stands to thank the staff member and talk to Zhilee, but the questions about how he was doing and why he was feeling bad were getting nowhere.

I tried to turn the conversation to his teammates, and talked about my own experience playing tennis. While the sport was meant to be individual, I explained that my best moments with tennis were in college, when I was a part of a team. I mentioned that while how I played mattered, what was most exciting—what I cared about the most—was sitting on the sidelines knowing that we were all working together and if one person did well or poorly, we were going to stand by each other. Then I turned it back around, reiterating that Marvin and Kathy were part of his team. (continued next page)
I asked Zhilee to think about watching the match, and told him that I was proud of him for making it so far in his first-ever tennis tournament.

I hurried back to the court. The match was a tiebreaker. The Tenacity tennis director came over to us and reminded us that we should prepare for the kids to be upset, but that it would be the best learning experience for sportsmanship and competition. I couldn’t help but think about Zhilee up in the stands.

Match point. I felt my heart pounding while I stood on the sidelines and felt a rush of empathy for my own coach and parents when I myself played. Game. Set. Match. Winner: the DMC team of Marvin and Kathy.

Yells of excitement went up from the court and the stands. There were beaming smiles and a sense of proud satisfaction from the kids. A few minutes later, with cameras flashing around them, Kathy and Marvin stood on the court with the trophy in their hands. Meanwhile, Zhilee had all of his stuff packed, waiting impatiently for us to drive him home.

The weekend passed, but the rush of the tournament was still buzzing with the staff members. At the start of 6th grade gym, we had all of the Tenacity kids sit down to announce the tournament results. Cheers erupted when we brought the trophy out, but a surprise hand went up. Zhilee wanted to make an announcement: “I just wanted to say that Kathy and Marvin won the trophy for the DMC. They played really well and we should congratulate them.” This was said with incredible sincerity and maturity.

While we gathered the 40+ 6th graders to take a group picture around the trophy, we all watched Zhilee smile and laugh with his friends, thinking the same thoughts of admiration. His teammates may have won the trophy, but Zhilee was the epitome of sportsmanship. To congratulate his teammates in light of his own loss displayed a level of graciousness and respect that takes many people years to develop. Zhilee was the embodiment of maturity gained from sports. He was our rising star.
Post-Secondary Success

Exemplifying the goal of post-secondary success, 13 Tenacity students are graduating this academic year. Congratulations!

Rosemary Onofri  
Antonino Giacalone  
Amalia Perla  
Kevin Chan  
Gisselle Harris  
Brian Madrigal  
Doris Hernandez  
Sarata Kaba  
Akira Austin  
Jasmine Ortiz  
Karen Ngo  
Meghan Le  
Victor Franco

Boston College
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
Bridgewater State University
College of the Holy Cross
Lincoln Technical Institute
Northeastern University Foundation Year
Northeastern University Foundation Year
Northeastern University Foundation Year
Northeastern University Foundation Year
Suffolk University
Suffolk University
University of Massachusetts - Lowell
Year Up

College Prep Acceptance List for 2015

Tenacity College Prep students are taking the next step on their Pathway to Post-Secondary Success. As of early May, students had received 75 acceptance letters from an impressive list of colleges, universities, and other post-secondary programs:

Bay State College
Boston Carpenters Union Internship
Boston College
Bridgewater State University*
Bristol Community College
Bunker Hill Community College*
Clark University
Colby-Sawyer College
College of the Holy Cross
Cornell University
Curry College*
Emmanuel College*
Fisher College*
Fitchburg State University*
Framingham State University*
Lasell College*
Mass Bay Community College
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
Massasoit Community College*
Middlesex Community College
Mt. Holyoke College
Mt. Ida College
Newbury College*
North Shore Community College
Northeastern University Foundation Year
Pine Manor College
Quincy College*
Regis College*
 Roxbury Community College
Salem State University*
Suffolk University
Swarthmore College
University of Massachusetts - Amherst*
University of Massachusetts - Boston*
University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth
University of Massachusetts - Lowell
University of Michigan
University of Toronto
Wentworth Institute of Technology*
Westfield State University
Wheelock College*
Year Up

* = more than one student accepted
Meet Oneda Horne:
Director of College Prep and Post-Secondary Services

We are excited to introduce Oneda Horne, our new Director of College Prep and Post-Secondary Services. Oneda brings to Tenacity a zeal for creating access to equitable education for underrepresented youth.

Born and raised in Boston, Oneda attended Boston Public Schools before earning her B.A. from Wheaton College (MA) and her M.A. in Higher Education Administration from Boston College. Prior to joining Tenacity, Oneda worked as a college counselor for Bottom Line, a national nonprofit serving low income youth who are among their family’s first generation of college attendees. She then joined Steps to Success (STS), a program that provides educational support and mentoring for Brookline students living in Brookline public housing.

While at STS, Oneda developed the College Success Initiative, a comprehensive curriculum aimed at increasing the college completion rates among low income PSB graduates. Oneda is thrilled to lead Tenacity services at the high school and post-secondary level, in a role that uniquely combines her own educational background, work experience, and commitment with providing academic and social support resources to underserved youth.

In April, Tenacity officially kicked off our first ever College Prep Ladies Fitness Club. Using the gym and resources of New Balance with Tenacity VP of Tennis/Fitness Scott Staniar’s guidance and coordination, we have been able to have a variety of students, ranging from freshmen to seniors, participate in an exciting array of fitness classes. Staff and students alike are having a great time with Coach Jackie. One student, upon leaving the gym on the first day, even said “I never knew fitness could be so much fun!”

College Prep Twins Shine at Fenway High School

Fenway High School’s motto is “Work Hard. Be Yourself. Do the Right Thing.” Twin sisters, Lorena and Laura Escolero, definitely took those words to heart. On June 5th, they closed the books on very successful high school careers. Lorena earned the Fenway Science Award while Laura was not only valedictorian, she also earned the Comcast Leadership Award and the Princeton Book Award.

High school graduation is a rite of spring that conjures strangely mixed emotions: anxiety, pride, relief, excitement and, for many, a sense of melancholy. This is, after all, the end of a four-year journey, even as it’s the beginning of a new chapter and something far bigger than what came before. Lorena’s next chapter will begin this fall at Mt. Holyoke College while Laura’s will begin at College of the Holy Cross.

Congratulations to Lorena and Laura, and to all of our graduates!
Tenacity College Prep student, Emely Herrera, is a leader of service projects through her church, helping to provide child care for families in her community. She also volunteers during the school year and works during the summer at Massachusetts General Hospital. Emely graduates this spring from East Boston High School and plans to pursue a degree in Nursing.
Emely Herrera, a senior at East Boston High School, shares her moving story of how she overcame a language barrier and turned bullying into motivation to become a top student.

By Emely Herrera

I moved here from El Salvador when I was nine years old. I didn't speak English and neither did my mother and father. It was very tough. And lonely. Friends didn't want me in their groups because I didn't speak English like they did. I did my homework by myself. Because Spanish was my first language and I wanted something familiar, I didn't try to learn English.

But then I got bullied by some kids at school. They made fun of me for not being able to speak like them. So I told myself, 'it's time to learn.' I'm someone who is very determined. When I decide to do something, I work at it until I succeed. I stayed after school every day for the next three years – working at my English – because that's how long it took.

I joined Tenacity in 6th grade. They really helped. They worked after school with me, helping with English and practicing writing and reading. I had to write in a journal every day. My English skills just got better and better by practicing. When I started feeling comfortable with the language, I found out how much I love English, and then how much I love science . . . especially science.

My course load is challenging. I'm in AP English Literature, AP Biology, AP Calculus and Honors Chemistry. All that hard work has paid off, though. I was selected for the National Honor Society and as an MGH Youth Scholar at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Looking back on it now, the ironic thing was that when I got to high school, the same girl who bullied me in 4th grade was in my freshman English class. And now I am the only one who is in AP English. I can laugh because she is my friend now, no hard feelings, and she was the impetus for me to learn my new language.

Tenacity has been there with me every step of the way. Sarah has always been there for me. She’s not just my mentor, she is also my friend. I can talk to her about personal problems and she always gives me good advice. It makes my parents feel good to know that she is there for me and that she can help me in ways that they can't. The college application process was very hard. Sarah and Ellen stayed on top of me. They even took me to visit colleges. Ellen would stay after school and help me with college applications; she makes time for me even though she has many other seniors to speak with.

We came here because my parents wanted a better life for themselves and their children. You know how you hear about the American Dream. Well, my dream is to go to college and be successful. I want to be a pediatric nurse because I love kids. But my biggest dream is I want to be someone who is going to make my parents proud.
In April, Tenacity was the official charity for the PowerShares Series Champions Cup. This provided an exciting opportunity for 15 Tenacity Middle School Academy, College Prep, and Post-Secondary students to participate as ball boys and ball girls on court and watch former World #1 players John McEnroe and Andy Roddick compete against former World #4 players Todd Martin and James Blake.

New Balance invited a group of Tenacity Middle School Academy students to visit their headquarters to learn about the shoe design process. Students worked with New Balance staff to create their own custom shoes. The experience provided wonderful real-world exposure to how a successful company operates.

With the Middle School Academy’s special focus on literacy, finding engaging ways to connect students to books and authors and getting them excited about reading is always a top focus. In May, a very special guest joined us for a Middle School Academy Literacy League event held at Ringer Playground. Bill Raynor, a local college basketball coach, youth development worker, and poet, creatively engaged students in an innovative and athletic way with his book of poetry: *Poetry in Motion*. Students were able to ask Coach Raynor questions about his poems and writing process, and he was able to give them all some basketball and life skills pointers.

Tenacity 8th graders from each middle school site came together during April Break for Tenacity’s annual high school readiness retreat. Over 35 students attended the retreat at the Holiday Inn Bunker Hill, where they participated in a variety of workshops and seminars geared towards easing the transition and helping them find success in high school. One of the workshops included College Prep students who served on a panel about overcoming obstacles. Students also had free time during the retreat to swim, play basketball, rock climb, and socialize at the hotel. Together, the Middle School Academy and College Prep staff planned and executed an informative and enjoyable event that was a highlight of the year!

Team Umana won a close match to seize victory in the Crane Cup Tournament. The 6th grade Staniar Open Tournament was won by Team Curley.
Tenacity Marathon Team Surpasses Fundraising Goal!

Tenacity’s Boston Marathon Charity Team raised $126,000 in 2015 to support Tenacity students on their Pathway to Post-Secondary Success. Fifteen team members ran on Patriots’ Day, all successfully completing 26.2 miles in the pouring rain. Afterward, the team celebrated at the Hampshire House post-marathon party. We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Boston Athletic Association for selecting Tenacity into their three-year charity program for the 2013 – 2015 marathons. In total, over $426,000 was raised over our three years in the program. Special thanks to New Balance for outfitting the team, George Doherty for his coaching, Tom Kershaw and Hampshire House for hosting team parties, and Bill Achtmeyer, Larry Greenberg, and the Tenacity Board for their generosity. We are indebted to our runners for their steadfast commitment. Each winter 15+ braved the cold conditions to train while raising awareness and donations. Notably, Joe Finelli and Jason Pina, who ran all three years, were pillars in our success, raising a combined $45,000 and bringing 250+ donors to Tenacity. We hope the BAA will select Tenacity again!

- Caroline Lane, Tenacity Board Member, BAA Liaison

George “King” Doherty running in the 2015 Boston Marathon.

Caroline Lane, Joe Finelli, Jason Pina, and Rob Rice (back row); Rebecca Malkin, Haley Thompson, and Erin Cooley at the Tenacity Gala, May 9, 2015.

Mike Bakalars, with his proud children at the Hampshire House post-marathon party.

In my three years as the Coach of the Tenacity Marathon Team, it has been extremely rewarding to witness so many first time Boston Marathon finishers, but more impactful is how the team’s substantial fundraising for Tenacity has impacted the lives of many Boston students.”

George “King” Doherty, Corcoran & Havlin Insurance Group

“As a Boston Public Schools employee, I am highly aware of the incredible impact Tenacity has on the academic achievement and social-emotional growth of students in our city. Personally and professionally, I knew the fundraising efforts of this team would help to close an achievement, access, and opportunity gap for kids who deserve the chance to succeed.”

- Erin Cooley, Boston Public Schools

“I chose to run and raise money for Tenacity because they provide supplemental school programming, combining academics and athletics, to underserved youth in Boston. It’s a great organization, and I was thrilled they gave me the opportunity to run the Boston Marathon.”

Kendall Tucker, The Parthenon Group

“I chose to run for Tenacity to have a positive impact on young people’s lives, and it has been a life changing experience for me.”

Mike Bakalars, Bakalars Sausage
The 2015 Show Your Tenacity Gala

The May 9th gala was a moving tribute to the power of tenacity. During the program, Tenacity Pathway students shared compelling stories of perseverance and overcoming obstacles, including College Prep seniors, Emely Herrera and Genesis Perez, who received standing ovations. The stories shared by all of the students underscored the impact that Tenacity’s programs have and why it is important to continue chipping away at the opportunity gap that many Boston students face.

The annual gala is our largest fundraiser and with over 650 supporters in attendance, Tenacity raised nearly $800,000! The money raised will help ensure that our work to level the educational playing field will continue to serve an increasing number of students. Our mission would not be possible without the generosity of our supporters and partners. Together we are making sure that underserved Boston youth have an opportunity to grow, learn, and ultimately realize their full potential on their Pathway to Post-Secondary Success.

Help inspire tenacity in the lives of underserved Boston youth

Make a secure, online donation at http://ow.ly/HniwX

Tenacity Serving 600 Elementary Students with Tennis

In May, Tenacity completed a school-year-long initiative to provide monthly tennis to 4th and 5th graders at five schools across Boston. The goal of the program is to build a recruitment pool of candidates for Tenacity’s Middle School Academy while providing valuable lessons in self-control and sportsmanship. Elementary Program students who find they love the games, camaraderie, and interaction with our staff are encouraged to join the Pathway when they reach 6th grade.

Why Tennis? Tennis offers unique skills and fosters the development of important qualities that are transferrable to other aspects of life. Examples include fairness, integrity, strategic thinking, adaptability, and yes . . . even tenacity. All of these traits will help students find success in school, in their relationships with teachers, parents and friends, and in their future careers.

Tenacity Elementary Program students participate in skill stations at Jackson/Mann K-8 School.
Summer + Tennis + Reading = Fun!

We are gearing up for a great summer of helping kids keep fit and stay sharp with our free Summer Tennis & Reading Programs in Boston and Worcester. At 24 sites throughout Boston, volunteers and 150 staff - many of whom are either current Tenacity students or alumni - will help 5,000 children and teenagers hone their literacy and tennis skills. In Worcester, four sites will serve 600 youth. These dynamic, educational programs help stem summer learning loss and build a love for tennis.