COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2016

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The Power of Community
By: Priya Atiyeh, Tenacity Volunteer at McCormack Middle School

This past year, I had the pleasure of being a part of the PULSE program at Boston College (BC). The PULSE program is a yearlong course that fulfills both the theology and philosophy requirements that focuses on educating students about social justice. By analyzing various classic and contemporary works of theology and philosophy, students are able to apply these texts to a real-life context. What makes this class unique is the 8-10 hour weekly service component. Students are able to choose from numerous placement sites in the Greater Boston Area. There is also a reflection component, which essentially bridges the gap between a student’s life and his/her service site, allowing them to gain greater appreciation and heightened insight into the way the world works.

I was given the honor to serve at Tenacity at the McCormick Middle School, where I worked both in the classroom and in the gym to promote success through literacy, fitness, and life skills to prepare students for future opportunities. From engaging students in tennis drills to assisting students with their Book Club, I truly enjoyed every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. Every task we tackled, no matter how inconsequential some seemed on the surface, had an immense impact on my experience with the program.

My experiences with the students and Tenacity staff truly brightened my sophomore year. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to see the students’ progress both in the classroom and in the gym. One student that particularly comes to mind is Ben. At the very beginning of the year, Ben struggled to hit a basic forehand and would act up during gym time. After hitting around with Ben a few times and showing him that I wanted to help him become more confident in his game, he began to not only seek me out to help him refine his strokes, but also would confide in me about his day and his daily Fitbit steps. Seeing Ben’s tennis skill range widen to include the ability to add spin, power, and strategy to annihilate his competitor, was truly gratifying.

One Tuesday, Ben came over to me, cracking jokes as usual. When I shared with him that it was my last day serving with Tenacity, his mood suddenly changed. He became upset then fist bumped me and said “Thanks for everything.” Although this moment, to many people, may seem trivial, to me it held many layers of meaning. I could see that our relationship had deepened. Further evidence of this deeper connection was displayed when Ben grew excited that the 7th graders were planning a field trip to my school, Boston College. During their April break, they visited BC and asked me such great questions about college and what steps to take in high school to be better prepared for success. I saw this glow in (continued next page)

“...A breakthrough moment was the work I did with Jose. Jose had poor grades and didn’t like doing homework. I worked with him every day and talked with his parents often. In tennis he became one of the best 6th graders in our program. This influenced his confidence and his grades started to rise. The thing that sticks with me the most was when he got an A in Language Arts. That, to me, meant everything.” - Gabriela Cohen, Tenacity AmeriCorps Fellow

AmeriCorps Fellow Opportunities

We are seeking great people to fill our Tenacity AmeriCorps Fellow roles for 2016-17. Do you have a loved one or neighbor who graduated from college this spring? Or is there someone you know who is considering a career change and thinks education mixed with tennis and fitness might be a great next step? If so, this could be the perfect opportunity. If you are interested in learning more, or know someone else who might be, the best place to start is our website. You’ll find a thorough overview and details about how to apply at: https://tenacity.org/americorps/. For more information, email: Apply2BFellow@tenacity.org.
(continued from page 2) their eyes that I will never forget - they believed in themselves and felt a sense of excitement for the future. I saw this same glow when Luis would make a forehand and execute his victory dance or when Marianne engaged one of the coaches in an intense rally. These students have so much potential and knowing I was able to help make them aware of that, is truly the essence of Tenacity.

As illustrated through my story about Ben, I have learned the importance of building trust into meaningful relationships and how to better engage students in order to serve as a support system for them in any endeavor. Many students shared their successes and even their failures with me because of the level of comfort we reached in our relationship. The consistency of the Tenacity program helped foster these deep connections.

The importance of listening, essentially learning how to close your mouth and open your ears in order to truly hear the concerns and questions of the students, served me well during my time at Tenacity. I can’t begin to express in words how transformative my experience at Tenacity has been in developing how I view the world and how I see myself. I have so much appreciation for the awesome students and staff I met. I am eager to see the amazing accomplishments both the students and the staff will pursue in the future.
### Post-Secondary Success

Exemplifying the goal of post-secondary success, seven Tenacity students completed degrees or certificates this past year. Congratulations!

- **Arivu Anukanth**  
  Bachelor’s Degree  
  *Northeastern University*

- **Nadia Chang**  
  Bachelor’s Degree  
  *Salem State University*

- **Lissette Deleon**  
  Bachelor’s Degree  
  *Mount Holyoke College*

- **Hector Flores**  
  Bachelor’s Degree  
  *University of Massachusetts, Boston*

- **Felixaura Pena**  
  Bachelor’s Degree  
  *Bridgewater State University*

- **Ernest Sandefer**  
  Bachelor’s Degree  
  *Northeastern College of Professional Studies*

- **Kelvin Veloz**  
  Certificate in Automotive Technology  
  *Porter and Chester Institute*

### College Prep Acceptance List for 2016

Tenacity College Prep students are taking the next step on their Pathway to Post-Secondary Success. As of early June, 31 students had received 111 acceptance letters from 66 different colleges and other post-secondary programs, including:

- American University*
- Assumption College*
- Bay Path University*
- Bay State College*
- Boston College*
- Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
- Bentley University*
- The Boston Conservatory*
- Bridgewater State University*
- Bryant University*
- Boston University*
- Bunker Hill Community College
- Colby College*
- Columbia College (Chicago)*
- Curry College*
- Eastern Nazarene College*
- Emmanuel College*
- Fisher College*
- Fitchburg State University*
- Framingham State University*
- George Mason University*
- Hamilton College*
- Hampshire College*
- Hartt School of Music*
- Harvard University*
- Hillsboro Community College
- College of the Holy Cross*
- Lasell College*
- Lesley University*
- Lincoln Technical Institute
- Longy School of Music of Bard College*
- Manhattan School of Music*
- Mannes School of Music*
- U.S. Marine Corps
- Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*
- Middlebury College*
- Morgan State University*
- Mt. Ida College*
- North Carolina Sports University
- New England Conservatory of Music*
- Newbury College*
- Northeastern University*
- Northeastern Foundation Year
- University of Notre Dame*
- Princeton University*
- Salem State University*
- Salve Regina University*
- Simmons College*
- Stonehill College*
- Suffolk University*
- UMass Amherst*
- UMass Boston*
- UMass Dartmouth*
- UMass Lowell*
- University of New Hampshire*
- University of Hartford*
- University of the Arts*
- University of Rhode Island*
- Wentworth Institute of Technology
- Wheaton College*
- Wheelock College*
- William Penn University*
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

*Four-Year College or University
A SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP

Led by a desire to build a corporate volunteer relationship with Tenacity, Keith Bodnar and his team from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) got together with Ned Eames and his team from Tenacity to brainstorm an innovative win-win partnership. Together they crafted a model partnership that is creative and effective in the way it supplies volunteers two days a week to the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester. On Tuesdays and Thursdays during the school year, a team of four PwC professionals volunteer their time mentoring, supporting and teaching Tenacity students. Using teams of 20 volunteers dedicated to each day they cover, PwC can accommodate variable corporate schedules while still providing the Tenacity team at the Frederick with the consistency of volunteer support they need. Now completing the third year of the program, both Tenacity and PwC are proud of the relationship and the positive impact it has on the students. Tenacity would love to develop more corporate partnerships based on the success of this model.

PwC volunteer Allison Miller shared that going into the classroom is a welcome change of pace from daily work and “an experience you won’t forget. I’ve been with the program for three years now. Recently I watched the eighth graders graduate from the program, the same students that started in sixth grade when PwC joined the program. It was so interesting to watch them grow and change over the three years, and so exciting to see how happy they were to move on to high school!”
AMC CAMPING TRIP

During April vacation week, Tenacity staff and AmeriCorps Fellows took a group of Middle School Academy students on an overnight camping trip to the White Mountains in New Hampshire. Students hiked and had fun exploring while sharing meals and bunking at an Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Lodge. These trips are a wonderful way to expose our students to the great outdoors and encourage an interest in nature. Plus, what student doesn’t love spending a night or two away from home!

ANNUAL 8TH GRADE RETREAT

Over 50 of Tenacity’s Middle School Academy 8th graders attended our annual 8th Grade Retreat, which was hosted this year by Babson College. The group was drawn from all six of our partner schools. Students participated in a variety of fun team building and competitive activities, including a ropes course. The Retreat also offered students the opportunity to stay overnight on a college campus and participate in learning activities geared toward preparing them for a successful transition to high school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMY HIGHLIGHTS

Tenacity Middle School Academy students ford a stream on a hike during their AMC camping trip.

ANNUAL 8TH GRADE RETREAT

Tenacity Middle School Academy 8th Grade Retreat attendees participating in an icebreaker activity.

It wouldn’t be a Tenacity event without a little bit of friendly tennis competition.

The ropes course taught students valuable lessons about teamwork and trust.
Tenacity Marathon Team Surpasses Fundraising Goal!

Tenacity’s Boston Marathon Charity Team raised $140,000 in 2016 to support Tenacity students on their Pathway to Post-Secondary Success. 14 team members successfully completed 26.2 miles in the blazing sun on Patriots’ Day. Afterward, the team celebrated at the Hampshire House post-marathon party, which was generously donated by Tom Kershaw.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Boston Athletic Association for continuing to include Tenacity among its elite organizations in the Charity Program. Since 2013, over $580,000 has been raised for Tenacity by our marathon teams.

Special thanks to Stan Mescon for outfitting the team in New Balance, and to Bill Achtmeyer, Larry Greenberg, and Bud Schultz for their continued generosity.

We are indebted to our runners for their steadfast commitment. Notably, Jacqueline Gannon who has run for the team for three years and has raised a total of $45,000 and Doug Reeves who has not only fundraised on his own behalf, but has also made a personal donation to every Tenacity Marathon Team runner over the last two years.

We hope that the Boston Athletic Association will select Tenacity to be a member of the Boston Marathon Official Charity Program again next year!

- Caroline Lane, Tenacity Board Member, BAA Liaison

Bobby Gourdeau runs past the iconic Citgo sign in the 2016 Boston Marathon.

“Running the Boston Marathon for Tenacity was an amazing experience for me. Not only did I cross this off of my bucket list, more importantly, I ran in an effort to help the underprivileged kids of Boston. For that, I am extremely grateful and honored. Because of this, I plan to continue to stay involved with Tenacity moving forward!”

Bobby Gourdeau

Jacqueline Gannon, Haley Thompson, and Maggie McGoldrick (L-R) before the start.

“This is the third Marathon I have run for the Tenacity Marathon Team. Knowing that I’m raising money for a cause that’s impacting my own community in important ways is inspiring.”

Jacqueline Gannon

Lou Sorgi making his way down Beacon Street near Coolidge Corner - mile 24.

“Getting the chance to run the Boston Marathon while supporting Tenacity was such an amazing and worthy experience. A tick off the bucket list!”

Lou Sorgi

From a fourth grader participating in the Tenacity Summer Tennis & Reading Program to an AmeriCorps member spending a year in service, Rosemary Onofri is completing a full-circle Tenacity journey.

“I serve because so many people have poured their time, energy and talents into me,” shares Tenacity AmeriCorps Fellow and Tenacity Program alum Rosemary Onofri, “and I feel it’s important to give back to my community. Through Boston Public Schools and Tenacity, I was provided a quality education that catered to my interests and identity, so I have made it my mission to provide that to others.”

Rosemary, who grew up in Boston, began her Tenacity journey in 2003, her fourth grade year and the first time she participated in the Tenacity Summer Tennis & Reading Program (STRP). The weeks spent working with Tenacity staff and interacting with kids on and off the tennis court made a strong impression, one that would lead her to participate in STRP for the next five summers and to sign up for the Tenacity After School Excellence Program (ASEP) at Edison Middle School.

ASEP was the forerunner to the current Middle School Academy (MSA) program at Tenacity. Then, as now, the program involved a three-year commitment during middle school focused on improving academics, honing life skills, and learning about tennis and fitness.

After completing 8th grade in 2007 and graduating from ASEP, Rosemary transitioned into the Tenacity Alumni program. During her four years in high school at Boston Arts Academy, Rosemary developed a close relationship with Tenacity staffer, Stephanie Gendron, who during her tenure at Tenacity, was instrumental in developing the Alumni program and building it out to become what are now the College Prep and Post-Secondary Services programs. “Stephanie was a great friend and mentor. She went over essays, helped me improve my writing, and even assisted with cover letters for jobs. Her support was a constant that was, and continues to be, incredibly meaningful.”
Also during high school, Rosemary continued her involvement with STRP by serving as a Junior Staff Member, her first paying job and an experience that she says played a part in shaping her educational and career goals.

After graduating from high school in 2011, Rosemary went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a minor in Education from Boston College. Each summer during college she continued her involvement with Tenacity, serving as a Site Leader/Tennis Coordinator for the STRP program. “A big draw for me was the fellowship, teaching, and mentoring,” she says. “It sold me on the idea of service. I loved giving back.”

With college winding down, Rosemary knew that she was interested in working in youth development or education, especially with inner-city youth. She was familiar with the AmeriCorps program, having worked with Tenacity AmeriCorps Fellows as an STRP Site Director, so applying to spend a service year at Tenacity was a natural fit.

Serving at the Jackson | Mann K-8 School during the school year, Rosemary was part of a team of Tenacity AmeriCorps Fellows who worked closely with Tenacity students and staff. “What I really appreciated about our Jackson | Mann team was the wonderful chemistry and sense of shared purpose. I think the students could feel that connection and it served as a good model of cooperation and camaraderie.”

When asked about some of the most enjoyable aspects of the past year, Rosemary ticked off a list that included taking students on field trips. “The field trips were wonderful opportunities for the students to be a little freer, a little more themselves, and helped all of us build deeper connections. On one particular field trip, we had taken the students ice skating. I was a bit wobbly on my skates due to a past injury and expressed some nervousness to one of the students. She took my arm supportively in hers and said ‘Don’t worry. I’ve got you. If you go down. I go down.’ It was heartwarming.”

With the school year closing, the Tenacity AmeriCorps Fellows, including Rosemary, are gearing up to work the next couple months at STRP sites, a familiar role for her. Looking back, Rosemary shares “I found another amazing mentor in Natalia Martinez, Site Director & Academic Coordinator at Jackson | Mann. Her leadership is inspirational and she has an incredible knack for connecting with the kids in the program. Natalia is the reason I feel so confident going into a teaching fellowship next year. She has given me guidance, advice, and has gone above and beyond what a supervisor might be expected to do. She has taken me under her wing and I could not have gone through the process of applying for education related positions without her.”

Starting this summer, Rosemary will begin a Prospect Fellowship at Prospect Hill Academy. The Fellowship is a two-year teacher residency program where Fellows are paired with supervising teachers to directly support students within the classroom while simultaneously pursuing professional licensure and a Master’s in Education. Rosemary will be earning her degree from Boston University.

While her latest chapter at Tenacity is coming to an end, the organization will always have a treasured spot in her heart and mind. “Serving as an AmeriCorps Fellow this past year has given me a new perspective on Tenacity. I have an enormous amount of respect for how challenging the work is and how hard everyone works to have a positive impact on the students and families we serve.”

One of her first assignments at Prospect Hill Academy is to give a five-minute lesson. She is planning on talking about the importance of after-school and extended learning time programs, using Tenacity as an example of an effective model. “Who would have thought that when I enrolled in a free summer program in fourth grade that the lessons I would learn would stick with me all the way into adulthood?” It is a circle completed.

“So many people invested in me. That’s what inspired me to give back and to pursue a career in teaching.”
The 2016 Show Your Tenacity Gala

The May 21st gala was a moving tribute to the power of tenacity. Staff members Oneda Horne, Drew Hendrickson, and Jelani Townsell, along with Tenacity parent Maytee Pena and Tenacity graduating senior Jordy Baez, helped illustrate the powerful impact that Tenacity’s programs have on the lives of our students. The stories shared by each of the speakers underscored 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 550 supporters in attendance, Tenacity raised more than $830,000! 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.

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 six 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 Middle School Academy 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.
Part Tennis. Part Reading. Totally 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 23 sites throughout Boston, volunteers and 150 staff - many of whom are either current Tenacity students or alumni - will help nearly 5,000 children and teenagers hone their literacy and tennis skills. In Worcester, five sites will serve 600 youth. These dynamic, educational programs help stem summer learning loss and build a love for tennis.