DEAR PROJECT SUCCESS ALUMNI,

Welcome to the first-ever Project SUCCESS alumni newsletter!

I launched Project SUCCESS in 1994 at North High School with just 200 students. Today, a staff of 33 joins me in serving more than 13,000 students and their families in 19 Minneapolis Public Schools each year. Over nearly 25 years, more than 100,000 Project SUCCESS alumni have been putting their dreams into action across the city, state, country and the world, including you. You are a part of this incredible journey. Wherever you are, we hope this newsletter finds you well.

We believe all young people have the power within themselves to create a successful life. Project SUCCESS is here to help them dream about the lives they want to live, ignite that power within to make it happen, and grow into self-fulfilled human beings making a difference in the world. I am still here 25 years later because what we do is making a difference, and we are as passionate about the work as we have ever been. I hope you, too, found that power within to propel you into who you are today.

Through this newsletter, our goal is to connect with you – to share our stories and progress, our dreams for the future – and offer many ways you can connect with each other and play a role in the future of Project SUCCESS. In our issue, we share “where are they now” stories about our alumni and facilitators, feature alumni-owned businesses, inspirational Project SUCCESS news, and upcoming events and opportunities to get involved.

Right now, we’re welcoming nearly 2,000 graduating seniors into our community of Project SUCCESS alumni. We hope you use this newsletter to keep the inspiration going for yourself and others, including our new graduates. We invite you to share your experiences and the wisdom you have acquired along the way and let us know what you want to see in future issues. Thank you.

Adrienne Diercks
Founder and Executive Director

WHAT’S NEW
AT PROJECT SUCCESS?

PROJECT SUCCESS IN WASHINGTON D.C.

Project SUCCESS brought 50 Minneapolis students to our nation’s capital to visit Howard University and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in March. This was our largest group of students to travel via plane on a global experience with the organization. Along with nine Project SUCCESS professional facilitators, board chair Jody Rodrigues and board member Shana Moses joined students on the four-day trip. Read more.

6TH ANNUAL DREAMS TO ACTION BREAKFAST

On April 17, old friends and new members of the Project SUCCESS community started their day with joy and inspiration at our sixth annual Dreams to Action Breakfast. They joined us in support of our program, serving more than 13,000 students and their families in Minneapolis. It was an opportunity for guests to learn more about our program and hear inspiring speeches from our two student speakers, Shaadia and Alejandro, and our founder Adrienne. Read more.

Visit www.projectsuccess.org for more Project SUCCESS news!

On June 1, we welcomed 30 alumni, current and former Project SUCCESS staff to a happy hour at Utepils Brewing for a chance to reconnect, hear more about what’s new with Project SUCCESS and enjoy some locally crafted beverages. After happy hour, we attended High School Musical at Anwatin Middle School – our 20th annual Project SUCCESS musical at Anwatin! It was a great evening to celebrate all the places we’ve been as an organization and look ahead to an exciting future. Interested in attending, assisting with or hosting a future event like this? Contact Sai Chang: saic@projectsuccess.org

ALUMNI GATHER TO RECONNECT AND CELEBRATE ANWATIN’S 20TH ANNUAL PROJECT SUCCESS MUSICAL

JUNE 2018
CONTRIBUTORS

SAI CHANG
Project SUCCESS Development Associate

AMY S. BARTHEL
Project SUCCESS Communications Associate

FRANCES BOHNLEIN
Project SUCCESS Alumna

LINDSEY FREY
Project SUCCESS Volunteer

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?
Contact Sai Chang
sai@projectsuccess.org

(612) 876-3921

We are looking for alumni to write, edit, take photos and more!
Julia Mann had her first Project SUCCESS experience as a sixth grader at Anwatin Middle School, participating in workshops with her facilitator, Jason.

The workshops are among her strongest memories of Project SUCCESS: “The workshops were something fun and different,” she says. “They helped me think more about myself and what interested me from a young age.”

A natural-born performer, Julia participated in all of the musicals Project SUCCESS offered at Anwatin. One of Project SUCCESS’ original partner schools, Anwatin just celebrated a 20-year anniversary of Project SUCCESS musicals in 2018.

“Every Project SUCCESS experience I had was powerful to me,” she says. “Workshops, musicals, professional theater experiences, field trips — they all helped give me exposure to new opportunities and different ways of thinking.”

After graduating from South High, Julia attended Luther College in Iowa. Among her formative experiences in college, she developed a one-woman show, Mixed Reality, exploring her mixed-race identity.

“Project SUCCESS taught me that I can define success for myself in any way that I want as long as I am happy,” she says. “It taught me the importance of having a variety of experiences in life and that you can learn something new from each experience.”

Julia’s advice for current students: “Give back, explore the arts, get to know different types of people, work hard in school,” she says. “These are life skills that go beyond what you learn in the classroom. Explore new opportunities and push for your own level of success.”

For Julia, that meant focusing on her real-world skills she uses now at Target and throughout her career. “I’ve learned I have the power to be in control of my own fate and experiences,” she says. “I am the one who gets to decide if I’m happy in my current work, and I can be open to new experiences to allow for growth and discovery.”

Continuing to redefine her dreams has been a part of Julia’s life since her time in Project SUCCESS, and she finds ways to keep them alive in all aspects of her life. “Through my work at Target I have found ways to keep singing, performing, and educating people on topics that are near and dear to me,” she says. “Even though I’m not a famous singer or performing on Broadway, those passions and experiences that I had as a kid have truly set me up for the success that I have today.”

As for Project SUCCESS, Julia reflects: “It makes you feel like you are capable of anything, and you have all these cheerleaders there to support you on the journey. It is a real community and they will welcome you in for a lifetime.”

Julia attended Luther College and graduated with a degree in Communication and Media Studies and a minor in Music.

Now Julia is a Senior Promotional Signing Producer at Target as well as a performer. Julia also leads the Communications team for the African American Business Council within Target.

Julia works for Target Corporation while continuing to pursue her passions for equity and the performing arts.

“Project SUCCESS taught me to believe in myself, explore and build a community where I feel supported.”
Q: What brought you to Project SUCCESS?
A: In 2002 Project SUCCESS was in need of a Director for the musical at Anwatin Middle School. I knew Jenny Batten from the Guthrie Theater, and Jason Brown from working with Outward Spiral Theatre Company. Jenny and Jason recommended me and I got the call. I hesitated because I had never worked with that many middle school students. I took the job and not only fell in love with the students and community at Anwatin, but with the tight-knit powerhouse team of Project SUCCESS.

Q: How did you get started doing musicals at Project SUCCESS?
A: I continued to direct the Anwatin play for the next 12 years and once I began to transition away from facilitation, I put my focus on managing and expanding the musical theatre department into Sanford Middle School and Marcy Open School. I then directed all three shows each year until 2015. After that I began to transition out of fulltime directing.

Q: What is your favorite Project SUCCESS memory?
A: The stories that stick out to me involve students making huge breakthroughs and succeeding in ways even they never imagined, large scale Project SUCCESS events where the team seemed to pull off the impossible, or quieter moments where I was able to witness students make a subtle but monumental shift in their perspective on life.

Q: What was your favorite workshop to deliver? Why?
A: Survivor was my favorite. It is interactive storytelling at its best and allows students the chance at prioritizing values in a safe environment. In life there are times when we need to make difficult choices and at those pivotal moments we turn to the foundational values that have held us up so far.

Q: What was your favorite musical to work on? Why?
A: The musical that has had the most impact on me has been And So I Did. That show spanned over three years and was seen by thousands of students in the United States and Mexico. The show grew as the students grew, shifting and changing as the students began to experience more of the world.

Q: What are you doing now?
A: I have turned my focus toward helping adults gain traction in their lives. I started my own business as a coach and facilitator with a focus on helping people and organizations get unstuck. I've decided to dedicate myself to being that person, an accountability buddy, to help people who are stuck set goals, gain traction, and move forward.

LOOKING BACK WITH JEFFRY LUSIAK
FORMER FACILITATOR

2002 TO 2017
Resident Artist
Facilitator, Franklin, Northeast, Southwest
Director of Musicals
Musicals Program Manager

VISIT JEFFRY’S WEBSITE: WWW.JEFFRYLUSIAK.COM
Q: What was your experience like as you applied for college?
A: I knew that I wanted to go to a small school. I loved that Luther was in a small town, so I could kind of avoid distractions, and it had a community feel. But growing up in the Twin Cities, it was actually a bit of a culture shock for me. At Luther I was exposed to a lot of different things. I learned how to think critically. I am a true liberal arts student. They taught me how to become a lifelong learner. It's all about making connections. I've met people and asked ‘Will you be my mentor?’ Reach out to people you want to work for candidates. It was a challenge to put yourself outside of your comfort zone.

Q: How did you decide what to major in?
A: My passion was, specifically, that I wanted to work for candidates. It was a challenge to put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Know what you want to be, challenge yourself and work to advocate for the priorities of Be the Match. My role is to work with people across the country to build relationships, secure gifts, and work to advocate for the priorities of Be the Match.

Q: What advice can you offer based on your career experience?
A: I’ve met people and asked ‘Will you be my mentor?’ Reach out to people you want to learn from, and ask for advice. Every job I got, I networked my way into. Self advocacy is a huge part of it. If you’re applying for a job, find a way to stand out. Find the hiring manager on LinkedIn and see what connections you have. It’s all about making connections.

Q: What advice do you have for students in a similar situation?
A: College is about figuring it out. If you don’t know what you want to be, challenge yourself and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Take advantage of everything college has to offer.

Q: What did you do after college?
A: After working on the Obama campaign, which was a great experience, I was able to get a job with the DFL. I didn’t enjoy that as much as my job with the campaign; I learned my passion was, specifically, that I wanted to work for candidates. It was a challenge to graduate into the 2008 economic downturn, to work for candidates. It was a challenge to put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Know what you want to be, challenge yourself and work to advocate for the priorities of Be the Match.

Q: What if you were in a similar situation?
A: College is about figuring it out. If you don’t know what you want to be, challenge yourself and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Take advantage of everything college has to offer.

Q: How did you decide what to major in?
A: I changed my major. I started out in music, and then English, wanting to be a teacher. After a summer as a camp counselor, I realized that as much as I loved working with kids, teaching wasn’t for me. I had a background studying German and ended up studying abroad, which was completely eye-opening and helped lead me to a German major. My senior thesis ended up being about the rise of hip hop culture in Germany, comparing east to west. When I was one class short of getting my double English major, I had a few once-in-a-lifetime opportunities come my way. One was to participate in the open; another was working on Obama’s 2008 campaign. I changed my major to a minor to take advantage of those opportunities, and I don’t regret it for a minute. They were transformational. I might not have graduated with my double major, but I came out ready to take on the world. It also allowed me to build in time for other things, like playing music, building lifelong friendships, attending events and panels on campus, and seeking out mentors. It helped me personally and professionally. I was networking.

Q: What does your current job entail?
A: I am the Director of Major Gifts at Be the Match, operated by National Marrow Donor Program. My role is to work with people across the country to build relationships, secure gifts, and work to advocate for the priorities of Be the Match.

Q: How have your experiences shaped you into the business owner you are now?
A: “Project SUCCESS has shaped me into the business owner I am now. I am a photographer which is one of the 4 things ‘I wanted to be when I grow up,’ which is something I drew out in middle school with Adrienne as my facilitator.”

Q: What advice do you have for students in a similar situation?
A: College is about figuring it out. If you don’t know what you want to be, challenge yourself and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Take advantage of everything college has to offer.

Q: What advice can you offer based on your career experience?
A: I’ve met people and asked ‘Will you be my mentor?’ Reach out to people you want to learn from, and ask for advice. Every job I got, I networked my way into. Self advocacy is a huge part of it. If you’re applying for a job, find a way to stand out. Find the hiring manager on LinkedIn and see what connections you have. It’s all about making connections.

Q: What advice do you have for students in a similar situation?
A: College is about figuring it out. If you don’t know what you want to be, challenge yourself and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Take advantage of everything college has to offer.

Q: What advice can you offer based on your career experience?
A: I’ve met people and asked ‘Will you be my mentor?’ Reach out to people you want to learn from, and ask for advice. Every job I got, I networked my way into. Self advocacy is a huge part of it. If you’re applying for a job, find a way to stand out. Find the hiring manager on LinkedIn and see what connections you have. It’s all about making connections.

Q: What advice do you have for students in a similar situation?
A: College is about figuring it out. If you don’t know what you want to be, challenge yourself and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Take advantage of everything college has to offer.

Q: What advice can you offer based on your career experience?
A: I’ve met people and asked ‘Will you be my mentor?’ Reach out to people you want to learn from, and ask for advice. Every job I got, I networked my way into. Self advocacy is a huge part of it. If you’re applying for a job, find a way to stand out. Find the hiring manager on LinkedIn and see what connections you have. It’s all about making connections.

Q: What advice do you have for students in a similar situation?
A: College is about figuring it out. If you don’t know what you want to be, challenge yourself and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs. Try something you haven’t tried. Take advantage of everything college has to offer.

Q: What advice can you offer based on your career experience?
A: I’ve met people and asked ‘Will you be my mentor?’ Reach out to people you want to learn from, and ask for advice. Every job I got, I networked my way into. Self advocacy is a huge part of it. If you’re applying for a job, find a way to stand out. Find the hiring manager on LinkedIn and see what connections you have. It’s all about making connections.
Thank you for reading our first-ever alumni newsletter!

We want your feedback for future issues. Take our short survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WRJWHZV

Ways to stay involved:

- Alumni website
- Volunteer opportunities
- Make a gift