

Volunteers of The College Discovery Program (CDP) Win Local Award

August 12, 2020 - Volunteers of the College Discovery Program, an academic and mentoring program of the Ithaca Youth Bureau have been awarded The James L. Byrnes Award for Excellence. Tompkins Trust Company's James J. Byrnes Award for Excellence is an annual program that recognizes outstanding individuals and volunteer-based non-profit organizations for their contributions in Tompkins County. Recipients of the award are those who generously volunteer time and effort on an ongoing basis to activities that help others in Tompkins County. They make a significant contribution towards improving the quality of life for others.

Volunteers are an absolutely critical component of the delivery and success of the Ithaca Youth Bureau's College Discovery Program (CDP). The CDP has been operating for 13 years, having been created to address a growing awareness and concern that many youth with great potential but limited resources, in the Ithaca City School District, were not going on to higher education after high school.

According to Linda Cimasky-Barr, Program Coordinator, "CDP is a long-term mentoring and academic support program for middle and high-school students; we cannot run our program without volunteers and it is really a win-win situation for all, the CDP students benefit in a variety of ways and volunteers often stay involved for a year or longer because they enjoy the experience so much!"

The program serves a very diverse population of youth from backgrounds underrepresented in higher education, and in its 13 years it has achieved a remarkable record of success. The most recent data show that 91% of its participants have graduated from high school (excluding those who moved away), and of those, 88% went on to higher education, most to 4-year colleges and universities. It's particularly significant that most of these youth are the first generation in their families to attend college.

CDP's success relies on volunteer tutors and mentors. The program is fortunate to have a diverse pool of volunteers who support students during weekly homework clubs. More than 20 volunteer tutors help students with subjects ranging from math to English, social studies/history to the sciences, and Spanish, German and French.

Mentors are another critical group of CDP volunteers. They provide ongoing social support, friendship, guidance, and role models for program participants. Each CDP student is offered and encouraged to have a mentor during middle school and high school. The mentor-mentee match is based on commonalities, preferences, gender, and transportation logistics. Many mentors are college students of color and/or of low-income backgrounds, similar to many of the CDP students.

"The dynamic relationships that volunteers develop with the participants, make all the difference. Being encouraged by someone, who not only has things in common with them, but

understands the challenges they face can really turn things around for these young people. The volunteers are role models for the participants as well, giving them a glimpse of college life. It's really inspiring to see mentoring like this work.”, says Suki Tabor, Deputy Director at the Ithaca Youth Bureau.

Volunteer tutors and mentors play a cornerstone role in the service and success of the College Discovery Program, and we would like to thank and honor all of the 2019-20 tutors and mentors publicly for their contribution to young people in our community. The following individuals are the recipients of this award. On behalf of the students, families and staff of CDP thank you:

CDP Tutors (2019-2020):

Rielly Diemond	Lauren Kret
Sunny Chen	Raven Bartlett
Christina Arroyo	Lauren Cody
Jackie Fuentes	Isabella Vittlin-Stein
Joyce Tsai	Alizeh Khan
Amber Zheng	Raven Bartlett
Patrick Crossen	Elizabeth Ring
Alyssa Sheedy	George Mauceri
Connor Florczyk	Lirinda Ramasaj
Stephen Armstrong	

CDP Mentors (2019-2020):

Angela Affronti	Jose Martinez
Anush Vejalla	Daniel Hooper
Andreia Fenley	Kacie Allen-Pride
David Schwartz	Simon Barretter
Alaina Richey	Clare Meaders
Theo Stravel	Alyssa Cohen
Annie Lee	Jolly Shi
Daniel Lee	Kevin Chen
Jay Patel	Sam Wolf

As a long-term mentoring and academic support program, the College Discovery Program is designed to encourage and support access to higher education through academic and social opportunities for underrepresented students enrolled in the Ithaca City School District. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Linda Cimasky at the Ithaca Youth Bureau, 607-273-8364 ext. 2151 or via email at lbarr@cityofithaca.org