HeartShare St. Vincent’s Services (HSV) is committed and
determined to ensure that older youth leaving foster care get the
support they need to achieve their dreams. The newly re-launched
American Dream Program (ADP) is made possible through the
generosity of our thoughtful individual and foundation donors.

As a privately funded program, ADP provides education, emotional
support and career advancement programming to empower older
youth to overcome their personal challenges and excel as adults. The
program helps them find their own path, make a plan and develop the
skills they need to take on the challenges of work, education, finances
and adult responsibilities with energy and confidence.

Currently, we have thirty Scholars in ADP. The 2014-2015 ADP
Yearbook showcases the drive and determination of twenty of our
Scholars as they pursue their dreams, despite their personal
challenges.
Dareth entered foster care at the age of three. During her time in foster care, Dareth lived in over thirteen different foster homes and attended at least ten different schools. Growing up in foster care without her biological parents or family to support her was extremely difficult. Eventually, Dareth was placed in a supportive foster home with a family that encouraged her to dream big and pursue happiness. Dareth refocused her efforts in school and made tremendous strides her senior year of high school.

She applied for the National Foster Care to Success Scholarship, a highly competitive scholarship, and was one of eleven scholars to be awarded the scholarship for the 2014-2015 academic year. Dareth’s incredible resilience, in spite of many personal challenges, makes her a remarkable young woman. We are proud to have named her the Reverend Monsignor Robert M. Harris 2014 Youth of the Year.

With the help of ADP, Dareth is in her freshman year at SUNY-Sullivan. Upon graduation, Dareth plans to continue her education and obtain her Master’s Degree in Business Administration.

“I decided to define myself and not be defined by the social norms of others.”

—Dareth O.
Class of Fall 2016
SUNY Sullivan
Katherine A.

Katherine was placed in foster care at seventeen years old due to an abusive relationship with her family. Her transition to foster care was greatly influenced by the trauma she had experienced throughout her childhood. With HSVS, she found the safety and security for which she had longed.

Katherine is committed to helping those in need by pursuing a career in the legal profession. She dreams of one day becoming a Judge or an Assistant District Attorney.

Katherine currently is in her sophomore year at Kingsborough Community College, and she is studying Psychology. Katherine is extremely motivated to excel academically and regularly attends meetings with her peer study groups. ADP has assisted Katherine by providing school supplies, clothing, food and transportation, which has allowed her to focus on her academics.

“Life is short, make the most of it.”

—Katherine A.

Class of Fall 2018

Kingsborough Community College
Crystal entered foster care on a voluntary placement in 2013. According to Crystal, entering foster care has made her a much stronger person. Initially, Crystal struggled with creating and maintaining positive relationships with the staff and her peers in the New Brighton Group Home. Today, she is much more confident in herself and is focused on achieving her goals.

Motivated by her own life, Crystal dreams of advocating on behalf of youth in foster care by becoming an attorney. Currently, Crystal is a freshman at Queensborough Community College, majoring in Criminal Justice. Crystal recognizes ADP for helping her with tutoring, financial support and housing.

“Never give up your dreams. Struggling is just the beginning of getting where you are destined to be.”

—Crystal B.

Class of Fall 2018
Queensborough Community College
Alliyah was placed in foster care at the age of three. According to Alliyah, growing up in foster care without the support of family left her with a low sense of self-worth. She was embarrassed to tell her peers that she was a foster child and, as a result, had difficulty making friends. Alliyah channeled her energy into volunteering and finds great satisfaction in helping those in need.

Alliyah is in her senior year at SUNY Canton majoring in Individual Business Studies. Alliyah dreams of pursuing a career in nursing and one day becoming a doctor. Alliyah is extremely grateful for the financial and emotional support that ADP has given her.

“Do not allow yourself to be peer-pressured. Do what makes you happy and what puts your heart at ease.”

—Alliyah C.
Class of Spring 2015
SUNY Canton
Mamadou came to America with his family when he was fifteen years old. When his parents returned to Senegal, it was decided that he would move to New York to live with his aunt to pursue an education. One year later, due to a green card scam, Mamadou’s aunt was denied re-entry into the U.S. after a visit to Africa. This left him alone, with no money, no food, no family, and almost no shelter. After telling his soccer coach about his problems, Mamadou was placed with HSVS Jamaica Hills Group Home. HSVS did not just provide a roof over his head, food on the table, or clothes on his back. St. Vincent’s challenged Mamadou to dream out loud.

Thanks to ADP, Mamadou went on to earn his Associate’s Degree in Civil Engineering at the New York City College of Technology and will complete his Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering in 2015, from New York University’s Polytechnic School of Engineering. He currently has an internship with Turner Construction, an international construction services company which counts Madison Square Garden, JFK Terminal 5 expansion and the New York Times Headquarters amongst its projects.

“Education, to me, is the key to success because you will always have the knowledge and nobody can take that from you.”

—Mamadou D.
Class of Fall 2015
New York University’s Polytechnic School of Engineering
At the age of sixteen, Levar's father dropped him off at the Administration for Children’s Services. Little did Levar know that this would be the last time he would see or hear from his father. Upon being placed into foster care, Levar met other young people who had been similarly abandoned by their caretakers. Understanding that he was not alone helped Levar heal.

Initially, Levar was placed in the Wheeler Group Home on Staten Island. During his stay at Wheeler, Levar was offered therapeutic services to help him address his feelings of loss and abandonment, which continue to have a profound impact on his life. Shortly after placement, Levar transitioned to a foster home where he has been able to build strong relationships with his foster family.

Levar currently is a freshman at the New York City College of Technology, pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science. Levar receives tutoring and educational counseling through ADP. He credits ADP for providing financial support and academic counseling to help him on his road to success.

“In college you have an opportunity to create a better future. I encourage all of my peers to continue on with their education, and utilize all the services that are provided to youth in care. Anything is possible when you dream big.”

—Levar J.

Class of Fall 2016
New York City College of Technology
In 2004, Bianca's biological mother passed away, and Bianca was placed into foster care with HSVS. Initially, Bianca had a difficult time adjusting to foster care and frequently ran away with her young daughter, seeking solace in her friends. After a series of unsuccessful placements, Bianca and her daughter eventually were placed into a loving and supportive foster home with a foster parent who allowed them to flourish. Today, Bianca lovingly calls her foster mother “mom” and has found the safety and stability for which she has longed.

Desiring a better future for herself and her daughter, Bianca always dreamed of pursuing her education after high school. Unfortunately, when the time came for Bianca to attend college, she was forced to withdraw due to unreliable child care. Bianca thanks ADP for providing her a second chance, allowing her to re-enter college and helping her find safe and reliable child care options for her daughter. Bianca works closely with staff members to receive educational counseling and assistance with class registration and financial aid applications. ADP supports Bianca with the financial resources to cover the costs of books, school supplies and transportation allowing Bianca to focus on her studies.

After much hard work and determination, Bianca entered her freshman year at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, majoring in Criminal Justice. Bianca plans to pursue a career in the field of criminal psychology and launch a not-for-profit organization for abused women. To give back to her community and supplement her income, Bianca works full time as a home health aide, where she utilizes her passion for helping those who are in need, while maintaining her status as a full-time student and a single mother.

“Nothing is impossible. After all if you don’t, no one else will.”

—Bianca J.

Class of Fall 2016

Borough of Manhattan Community College
Lové J.

Lové was placed into foster care at the age of sixteen in the New Brighton Group Home where she feels that she was afforded many opportunities that may not have otherwise been available to her. Lové sought sisterhood amongst her peers and longed for acceptance. She had difficulty creating bonds with others and felt a void after having been separated from her family.

Lové is currently a sophomore at the New York City College of Technology, where she majors in Fashion Marketing. She plans on continuing her education in Marketing Management and Sales. Lové is committed to using her past experiences to help other youth in foster care, and she currently interns with HSVS as a Peer Counselor. Lové is grateful to ADP for its financial support, employment counseling and tutoring.

“Do not become a product of your environment or a product of your past. Learn from your mistakes, prosper through your adversities, and work toward creating a better future.”

—Lové J.

Class of Spring 2016

New York City College of Technology
Prior to being placed in foster care, Jeremiah lived with his aunt. Jeremiah describes his childhood as being filled with instability because they were constantly moving from place to place. As a result, Jeremiah was forced to transfer schools time and time again, which caused disruptions in his studies and left him unable to maintain friendships. In response to feeling out of control, Jeremiah took to running away, and at the age of fifteen, Jeremiah was placed into foster care. Jeremiah was placed into a group home setting and describes his transition into foster care as having been relatively easy. In light of his prior educational instability, Jeremiah faced many challenges in high school. With hard work and the support of staff, Jeremiah was able to graduate from high school and is now pursuing his college education.

Jeremiah is a freshman at Queensborough Community College majoring in Political Science. He successfully maintains his 3.0 GPA while working full time at JFK International Airport as a Passenger Service Agent. Jeremiah credits ADP for providing him with career counseling assistance that helped prepare him for the world of work and assisted him in identifying full-time employment. Jeremiah is an exceptional young man who dreams of running for political office in order to help shape a better tomorrow.

“I believe that with hard work and determination, anyone is capable of going far in life.”

—Jeremiah L.

Class of Fall 2016
Queensborough Community College
Melanie L.

Melanie was placed into foster care as a teenager. She describes her experience as being overwhelming, forcing her to grow up overnight and make adult decisions about her life. This experience helped shape Melanie and fueled her desire to achieve greatness.

Melanie is a freshman at the University of Buffalo pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Therapy. With the help of ADP, Melanie was able to identify college programs that offered degrees in her desired field. In addition to her studies, Melanie is deeply committed to helping those in need by volunteering with a local organization that raises money to provide food and supplies for veterans and survivors of natural disasters. Additionally, Melanie participates in a program that allows her to experience the medical profession by shadowing nurses and doctors in local hospitals.

She is grateful for the support of ADP that allows her to experience college life. Melanie is confident that, with the help of ADP, she will continue to become a better student and a better person.

“Education is dedicating your life to knowledge and intelligence, which will ultimately bring forth many opportunities.”

—Melanie L.
Class of Fall 2018
University of Buffalo
Damien was placed in foster care at the time of his birth. Although growing up in foster care was difficult, he was fortunate to be placed with his older brother, whom he idolizes. Damien moved from foster home to foster home and was eventually placed in a group home. Although adjusting to living in a group home was challenging at times, Damien always stayed positive and worked hard to reach his goals.

Damien currently is in his junior year at Buffalo State University where he is pursuing a degree in Business Management. Damien dreams of one day owning his own business and living a successful life. Damien is grateful to ADP for allowing him the opportunity to live on-campus at Buffalo State University, away from the distractions of New York City. Damien feels that without ADP he never would have had the opportunity.

“Stay positive, reach for your goals and pursue something you enjoy doing.”

—Damien L.

Class of Spring 2016

Buffalo State University
Patrick M.

Patrick was placed with HSVS at the age of fourteen, after a friend, trying to help him, disclosed Patrick’s abuse. Initially, Patrick struggled with maintaining positive relationships with his family and adapting to life in the foster home. Although he has faced many personal challenges, Patrick remains committed to becoming a successful adult.

Patrick currently is a freshman in the Borough of Manhattan Community College. Grateful for the emotional and financial support that ADP provides, Patrick continues to work hard in pursuit of a career in video production.

“I plan to work hard, stay clear of negativity and accomplish my dreams.”

—Patrick M.

Class of Fall 2016

Borough of Manhattan Community College
Santos N.

Santos entered HSVS after fleeing Guatemala on his own at the age of fifteen. According to Santos, emigrating to the United States of American and being placed into foster care had a profoundly positive impact on his life. During his seven years in foster care, Santos experienced difficulty in being far away from his family, learning to speak English and building relationships with people he did not know.

Currently, Santos aspires to pursue a career in Human Services and is attending the New York City College of Technology. He still struggles with completing homework assignments in a timely manner, but is working toward becoming a better student in and outside of the classroom. Santos credits ADP for its housing assistance, financial support and academic counseling, which specifically help him excel in his studies.

“The American Dream Program has been everything to me.”

—Santos N.
Class of Fall 2017
New York City College of Technology
Crystalann entered foster care in 1997 when she was six years old. For the next several years she was moved to a variety of different foster homes with hopes of finding the right fit, but to no avail. Her paternal grandmother started the adoption process in 2003, but the adoption fell through a few years later. By that time, Crystalann was sixteen years old, and her foster care plan switched to independent living. In 2011, she signed the lease on her first apartment in addition to starting her undergraduate studies.

In 2014, with help from ADP, Crystalann graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a degree in Forensic Psychology. Two weeks after graduation, she was offered a position as a senior research support specialist at the world-renowned Neurodynamics Lab at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, studying the novel phenotypes for the genetic analysis of alcoholism and substance abuse. Her plan is to continue her education. Crystalann will be applying for clinical neuropsychology and behavioral neuroscience doctoral programs, with the hopes of enrolling in the fall of 2015.

“Where you’re from does not determine where you go.”

—Crystalann R.
Class of 2014
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Henry entered foster care at the age of fifteen after his parents abandoned him. He admits that transitioning into life in foster care has been a mix of both positive and negative experiences. Having moved from a number of foster homes, he found it difficult to trust people and to feel secure. In time, Henry found a foster home in which he has been able to flourish.

Henry is a strong advocate for himself and works hard to accomplish his goals. Henry feels especially connected to his Case Planning Supervisor who has taught him to channel his frustrations and sense of loss into academics and employment. Those lessons have helped Henry become the accomplished and responsible young man he is today.

Henry is a freshman at Long Island University where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree. Upon graduation, Henry plans on entering a doctoral program in Physical Therapy. In addition to school, Henry interns with the Administration for Children’s Services and works part time with a physical therapist. Through ADP, Henry receives educational guidance and financial support, both of which are critical to Henry’s success.

“Be grateful for everything you accomplish and every good fortune that presents itself.”

—Henry R.
Class of Fall 2017
Long Island University
Throughout her childhood, Dylan experienced child neglect and physical abuse on a consistent basis. The one person she thought would always protect her, hurt her. January 29th, 2009 was one of the worst days of Dylan’s life. She was taken away from her family, and she and her siblings were separated within less than six months of being placed in foster care. Dylan was placed in any home that was available and was not compatible with many of the foster parents in those homes.

The lack of communication and emotional support in the homes led her to develop an independent mindset. She became a proactive individual throughout high school by participating in various extracurricular activities. Through ADP, Dylan entered LaGuardia Community College as a freshman in the fall of 2014. She aspires to become a Defense Attorney, helping people whose rights have been violated.

“Knowledge is power. I put my best foot forward and work very hard at staying on the right path so that things will be easier as I take this journey through life.”

—Dylan T.

Class of Fall 2018
LaGuardia Community College
Timothy and his siblings endured neglect at the hands of their caretakers and were placed into foster care. According to Timothy, the most difficult part about growing up in foster care was having to adjust to new foster families and having to assume adult-level responsibilities. Despite his tumultuous childhood, Timothy was able to maintain close relationships with his peers and staff members whom encouraged him to strive for greatness.

Timothy is a freshman at Queensborough Community College where he is majoring in Criminal Justice. With that degree, Timothy dreams of pursuing a career in law enforcement, specifically with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Timothy credits ADP for motivating him to follow his dreams and become a better and self-sufficient person. Through ADP, Timothy has received advocacy, career coaching, financial literacy and housing assistance.

“Your body can handle anything, it is your mind that you have to convince.”

—Timothy T.

Class of Fall 2016

Queensborough Community College
Shantel entered foster care at the age of six as a result of her mother’s mental health issues that rendered Shantel’s mother unable to care properly for her daughter. Shantel initially was placed in a non-kinship foster home until her maternal aunt came forward as a resource. As a result of her childhood experiences, Shantel had difficulty opening up and trusting people when she was first placed into foster care. She credits her experience in foster care with helping her to overcome those fears.

Shantel is a freshman at Lincoln University, where she plans on pursuing a degree in Communications with a focus on Film Production. In addition to her studies, Shantel is actively involved in extracurricular activities on campus. Currently, she is the treasurer of the Residential Hall Association and an active participant in “J-Vibe,” an organization that allows students to use creative arts to express themselves. Shantel receives financial aid from ADP to cover the costs of tuition, room and board, and other miscellaneous expenses to give her the freedom to participate in college life.
Shawan was placed into foster care due to his caretaker’s unwillingness to care for him. The transition to foster care was difficult, and his greatest personal struggle has been dealing with a lack of responsible adults on whom he can count on for support. Wanting to grow from his experiences, Shawan is committed to breaking through and becoming a successful adult.

Determined to leave foster care with marketable skills, Shawan is a freshman in the New York City College of Technology, majoring in Liberal Arts and Science. With the help of the ADP, Shawan was able to cover his book expense and is working closely with staff members to identify employment opportunities to add hands-on work experience to enhance his resume.
Travon was placed into foster care in 2004 as a result of complicated family dynamics. While in foster care, Travon received counseling to address the circumstances surrounding his removal from his family. Over time, Travon was placed in a kinship foster home and began to heal. Travon continues to struggle with having to admit to others that he is in foster care and having to face the stigma of being a “foster child.”

Sadly, Travon lost his biological mother three weeks prior to the start of the school semester. Despite this heartbreaking loss, Travon continues to persevere and make his family, and the agency, proud.

Travon currently attends Fulton-Montgomery Community College, where he pursuing an Associate’s Degree in Health and Recreational Studies. Travon is passionate about sports and would like to pursue a career in Sports Medicine. In addition to school, Travon is seeking an internship opportunity in the Sports Medicine field so he can experience the work firsthand. Travon thanks ADP for their financial support, tuition assistance and counseling.

“No matter how complex your situation is, never give up. We never know our full potential until we try.”

—Travon S.
Class of Fall 2016
Fulton-Montgomery Community College
The American Dream Program

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