

## Get Ready, Get In & Get Through

### A new initiative helps our members get into – and stay in – college

The West End House is proud to announce that our services have been expanded to include a focus on college persistence. Many of our high school seniors are the first generation in their family to enroll in college; these young people need specialized support to navigate the complexities surrounding higher education. This fall, a new full-time College Success Coach was added to provide case management. Our College Success Coach, Morgan Bondy, helps students overcome any uncertainties, insecurities or knowledge gaps while also guiding them toward on campus

services. She is their “go-to” person and supports them with non-academic issues such as financial aid, communication with professors and time management skills.

Our persistence program is part of Success Boston, a college completion initiative aimed at dramatically increasing the number of Boston Public School (BPS) students graduating college. The initiative is inspired by a groundbreaking study released by The Boston Foundation revealing that only 35% of BPS students completed a 2- or 4-year college degree within seven years of graduating high school. This number dropped to a sobering 24% when excluding students from Boston’s three exam schools, and dropped further still for black and Hispanic males.



[left-right] College students Davetta, Rucely and Jalen are all receiving support from the West End House

“Sometimes the smallest of roadblocks can throw off our teens,” says Mark DaCruz, Director of Teen Services at the West End House. “They might miss the first installment of their payment plan and find all their classes had been dropped. Not knowing their options, they miss

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## Live Long and Prosper

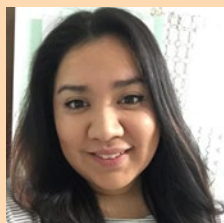
### West End House Alumnus Leonard Nimoy passes away

The West End House lost one of our original West Enders with the death of alumnus Leonard Nimoy on February 27 at age 83. Born in Boston’s West End, Mr. Nimoy was a proud member of the Hawks-Brenner Club at the West End House then located on Blossom Street. When Mr. Nimoy first showed an interest in acting, the West End House awarded him a scholarship for \$37.50 to attend an acting class at Boston College.

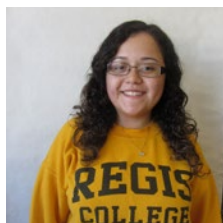
The man who would impact millions in his role as Mr. Spock hosted our Centennial Celebration in 2006. There, he shared how the West End House was where he and his friends enjoyed new experiences, were challenged by new ideas and became part of something larger than themselves. The impact of the West End House is evident in his own famous words: “The means of many outweigh the means of the few or one.”

# What's Happening: Paying it Forward

Meet 5 of our outstanding alumni who are now giving back and working at the West End House!



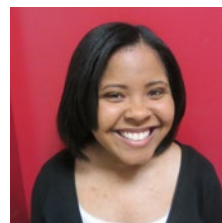
**Elena Mendez (21)**  
Support Specialist



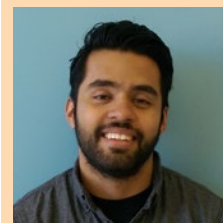
**Yelithza Galvez (23)**  
Brian J. Honan  
Fellowship  
Coordinator



**Shantell Jeter (26)**  
Sports & Fitness  
Coordinator



**Myesha Neely (23)**  
Welcome Center  
Coordinator



**Kevin Lopez (25)**  
Games Room  
Coordinator

*How did you first get involved at the West End House?*

I've been a member of the Club since I was 6. My older brother Luis was working here as a life guard at the time.

My family moved from Guatemala to the United States when I was 7. We moved down the street from the West End House and I've been a member ever since.

I started coming to the Boys & Girls Club when I was 7. My dad actually grew up here when it was "The Boys Club."

When I was 9 or 10, I heard of people from my neighborhood attending the West End House and wanted to try it out myself.

I first started going to the West End House because of a friend, and kept coming because of the awesome staff and all the fun things to do and people to meet.

*What inspired you to come back to work here?*

The West End House has helped me throughout my academic life. I wanted a career in education, and the West End House gave me the opportunity to learn.

I was involved in a lot of the programs when I was young. I knew that I wanted to return and give back to a place that has given me so much.

The Club has provided me with so many opportunities. It's my duty to give back, and I feel that alumni who come back bring a special passion with them.

When I went away for college, the staff here would reach out and help me in any way they could. When they asked me to work, I jumped at the opportunity to support kids at the West End House.

I was curious about what it was like to work here, and wanted to give back to my community in a meaningful way.

*What do you love most about your job?*

We are all truly a huge family, and there's always someone looking out for you. I love that I can give the kids a sense of family and genuinely care for their success.

I love all the kids that I interact with. I love making their days brighter in any way I can!

I value tough love and am something of a mother-figure; young people feel connected and able to come to me. I could never find bonds like this in any other work environment.

For me, it's the chance to change the lives of our youth and build meaningful relationships with them.

The kids! They surprise you every day with their maturity, jokes, and just being fantastically weird.

*What are your future dreams & goals?*

Before settling down in Boston, I want to live in and travel to different places in the world.

I want to open a Boys & Girls Club in the more impoverished areas of Guatemala.

I am working towards my Master's in Project Management and hope to get into Event Planning.

I hope to travel the world and somehow leave an impact through writing.

My goal is to become an illustrator of kids' books or comics. As long as I'm drawing for a living, I've made it.

*A fun fact about you:*

I used to have a pet pig.

By the age of 21, I had traveled to 3 continents and 11 countries.

I'm obsessed with manicures. I look forward to them every week and they make me a very happy girl.

I can't hold up three fingers on my left hand without the help of my right hand.

I come from a long line of twins: I'm a twin, my mother was a twin, her mother was a twin and her grandfather was a twin.

## Letter from the Director

Dear Supporter,

As you read this issue of *Club News*, you will notice the theme of support weaving through each article. We take pains to provide young people with support each day, and we know that we could not do our work without *your* support.

At the West End House, support takes many forms and it is different for every young person. Some families first turn to us when their child is 7 years old and they need an affordable option for after-school activities. Other times, a teen seeks us out when he decides he wants

to be the first in his family to graduate from high school. Some youth want to explore our arts programs, others are looking for their first jobs, and more seek out healthy lifestyles through our fitness and nutrition programs. Whatever a young person's need, we will be here to help them address it.

We now have a formal program to support youth as they pursue a college degree. We provide financial scholarships to our alumni, attend financial aid meetings, help navigate support services and offer constant words of encouragement. We do

whatever it takes to help a young person succeed.

I hope you will enjoy reading about the support services preparing our young people for success today and in the future. We could not do it without your continued support.

With best wishes,



Andrea Howard, Executive Director



## Light of Dawnn Awards

The first annual Light of Dawnn Awards was held on Wednesday, February 25 to honor the legacy of West End House alumna Dawnn Jaffier by recognizing the outstanding work of three individuals who are committed to building stronger communities. One of the award winners was West End House Director of Leadership & Lifeskills Vanessa Lewis.

"Vanessa truly embodies everything Dawnn wished for and worked toward," West End House Program Director Jenny Nute wrote in her nomination of Vanessa. "She sets the bar high for young people, always pushing them to do their best. With Vanessa, youth know she will be there to catch them when they fall, give them a safe space to discover themselves, and always makes sure they are having fun. It is these rare qualities that have positioned Vanessa as a mentor to colleagues at the West End House."



West End House member Oscar Aquino, 18, unveils his portrait of Dawnn

Highland Street Foundation provided generous support to recognize individuals who, like Dawnn and Vanessa, are uniquely talented in building relationships and fostering community. Congratulations, Vanessa!

## Get Ready, Get In & Get Through [cont. from p. 1]

the entire semester." Our College Success Initiative helps address such issues and more through alliances with 18 local colleges.

In our first year of coaching, we are supporting 32 college freshmen, and 35 college sophomores and juniors. We

have developed a strong partnership with Mass Bay Community College. As this partnership continues to grow, we look forward to working together to support the Mass Transfer program; a streamlined process to transfer within the Massachusetts higher education system to earn a Bachelor's degree.

Thanks to strong bonds between our members and staff, we expect to report back with encouraging progress of our alumni and how our persistence program is helping young people earn a college degree.



**WEST END HOUSE  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**

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[www.westendhouse.org](http://www.westendhouse.org)

*Our mission is to inspire and enable youth from all backgrounds to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.*

## Join Us!

Please mark your calendars – our Annual Celebration will take place on Saturday, May 2, 2015 at the West End House.

The exciting evening provides guests with the opportunity to recognize young people’s achievements, interact with children and families and experience the West End House firsthand. We hope you can join us!

For more information including sponsorship opportunities and ticket sales, contact Loraine Spreen ([lspreen@westendhouse.org](mailto:lspreen@westendhouse.org) or 617-682-1009).

### Presenting Sponsors



The Annual Celebration will take place on Saturday, May 2, 2015.

[below] Neila is one of our advanced artists

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