



Threshold Gazette

Threshold Program Celebrates 25th Anniversary

by Antoinette Donovan

More than 300 students, faculty, alumni, their families, and long-time friends of the Threshold Program gathered at the Charles Hotel last month to celebrate the program's 25th anniversary.

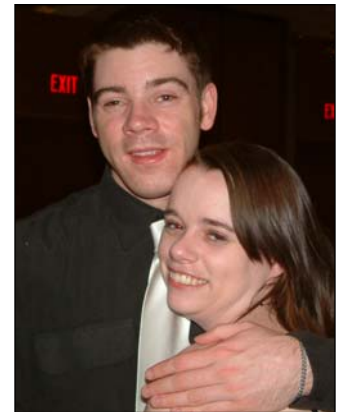
"It was a wonderful night to celebrate all the accomplishments of our students and alums," Threshold Director Jim Wilbur said. "We love to hear about their successes and think about how far they've come."

Founded in 1982 by School of Education Professor Dr. Arlyn Roffman, the Threshold Program is a college-based two-year certificate program that aims to prepare young adults with learning disabilities and cognitive limitations for employment and independent living. The goal of the Threshold Program is to guide the "whole person" forward by fostering growth toward independence through a comprehensive curriculum that emphasizes vocational training with a focus on independent living, psychological growth, effective use of leisure time, and creativity.

A highlight of the night included a moving speech by Ross Syford Hoyle, who is the mother of Threshold alum, Bryan Hoyle. She praised both students and faculty of the program for all their hard work and success over the years, saying families were lucky to have discovered such a supportive community.



Threshold alums Bianca DeGrandis, Ivan Aguirre, Morgan Benner, Sarah Mather and her friend Adam at the 25th Anniversary Celebration.



Threshold Alums Jordan Price and Leslie Killion



Threshold Alums Nick Bantem and Jessie Bogesse



Threshold Alums Katie DeMita and Jon Bernstein



Threshold Alums Allegra Ford and Pam Weiss

Note from the Director

Dear Alumni and Friends,
It has been a remarkable year at Threshold as we reached the twenty-five year milestone. The celebration was a huge success with more than \$100,000 raised for the Threshold Endowed Scholarship Fund. It was gratifying to reconnect with almost 250 alums, who affirmed the recent study that Threshold truly does make a significant difference to those we serve. I encourage you all to look at our web site to view the photos taken over the anniversary weekend and to read the very moving talk given by alumni parent Ross Hoyle. We look forward to the next twenty-five years and thank you all who have generously supported us for the past quarter century.

Jim Wilbur

"Five hundred students and their families have had the good fortune to walk through the doors of Lesley University to the Threshold Program," Hoyle said. "Here we found a community of support, advocacy and compassion. We found a reality based program, functioning in the real world, teaching life skills in a systematic way."

She also took a moment to let her son know how proud she was of his accomplishments during Threshold and after graduation as he successfully leads an independent life.

"Because of your struggle, Bryan, my life was richer, more meaningful and I had a chance to grow in ways I couldn't have imagined. I'm a better person today because of you," she said.

For many alums, the event was a perfect time to catch-up and reminisce about their time in the program. "It was a fun night and great time to see old friends," Moon Park '97 said. "I was really impressed and happy to see alums who had come from out of

state to be there."

Life-long friendships are a common outcome of the program and Hoyle remarked about the bonds formed at Threshold in her speech. "Threshold has been the focal point of all our lives for five years, and the wonderful thing is that the camaraderie, support and life connections continue," she said. "Students keep their friends and faculty and staff care enough to continue giving their support, guidance and friendship."

According to Wilbur, Threshold's alums and their continued success after graduation are the best testament of the program. "We really strive to prepare our students to not only enter the working world, but find jobs they enjoy, to feel confident, and lead rich, enjoyable social lives," Wilbur said. "Our alums continue to do this and it's a very powerful and inspiring thing to see year after year. This was the perfect night to celebrate together the rich history of the program and what our students have gone on to do." ❖



Threshold Activities

Transition Year's Capitol Trip!

On May 11-13, 2007, Transition Year students and chaperones, Patricia Morrissey and Carole Noveck, went on a wonderful adventure. The students chose to travel to Washington, D.C and in preparation for their trip they spent a semester investigating the many aspects of trip planning. They decided to travel by train from South Station, Boston to Union Station in D.C. They stayed in a Holiday Inn in Dupont Circle. From the minute they left Union Station until the time they left on Sunday, they explored the capitol of the US. They walked, traveled by Metro, the public transportation system, took a sightseeing trolley, and learned about the history and the present realities of the beautiful and busy city. A visit to Chinatown included some shopping and a great meal. Students had the opportunity to view public monuments, including Washington and Lincoln Memorials, the Vietnam Memorial, and the White House. They had an overview of the city and saw many more sights along the way on their trip, including a highlight to all, Perryville, MD. It was a great experience for all. ❖



Study Shows Success for Threshold Program

Results from a study administered last spring reveal major accomplishments for the Threshold Program and its graduates. Headed by Fran Yuan, pictured inset, Threshold faculty members administered the study in which graduates representing ten Threshold classes from 1996 to 2005 shared their post-Threshold experiences regarding employment, living patterns, independent growth dimensions, and living skills.

The study revealed that 80 percent of graduates surveyed are currently employed. Graduates worked in many capacities including as assistant teachers in early childhood settings, receptionists, assistant office managers, sales associates, and file clerks.

“Without this kind of training, students with these types of disabilities tend to bounce around from job to job,” says Director James Wilbur. “We completed this study ten years ago, and the full-time employment rate for our students has continued to grow higher despite changes and challenges in the job market.”

According to the study, 60 percent of students reported having benefits in their positions and 61 percent reported holding at least one job for four years or more.



Founded in 1982, Threshold continues to provide a combination of practical and academic experiences that enable students to learn vocational skills in early childhood or business and support services. Students also learn about money management, apartment living skills, and social skills. “This study provides us with some hard numbers as to what our graduates go on to accomplish after leaving the program,” says Wilbur.

The study also revealed increased independence in living patterns with 76 percent of graduates living on their own since graduation. Parents reported independent living skills, such as managing money and household chores, improved consistently since their children graduated from the program.

Threshold graduates and parents surveyed showed high levels of satisfaction for the overall Threshold experience. According to the study, 96 percent of graduates surveyed were satisfied with their overall level of independence and 83 percent of parents were satisfied with their children’s progress. Parents expressed the most satisfaction in areas of employment, social life, and general level of independence. ❖

Special Event . . . An Evening with Threshold Students

On Wednesday, April 11, Brookline Adult and Community Education (BACE) hosted an outreach program featuring a panel of Threshold students. This special event showcased Threshold’s post secondary education program for young adults with learning challenges. With Threshold celebrating its 25th year, and with more than 500 of its alumni living in Cambridge, Somerville, Brookline and surrounding communities, BACE viewed the event not just as an opportunity to promote the program, but also to raise awareness of the skills our alumni bring and the challenges they face.

The panel consisted of current students in the two-year program, and alumni of the post-graduate Transition year program, with support offered by several program faculty (Linda Brennan, Patricia Morrissey, and Carole Noveck). The twelve students - Jared Bowden, Anastasia Chickering, Kristen Gagnon, Courtney Hall, Lee Jones, Shayna Joseph, Dan Levin, Colleen McCluskey, Julie Nicol, Andrew Peyron, Ashley Roy, and Davina Samuels - talked directly to an audience about how the Threshold Program helped them move from dependence to an independent lifestyle. They discussed the barriers to success and how they have learned to advocate for themselves, become employed and how they actively contribute of their communities. Several of Threshold’s alumni parents were also available to answer program questions. ❖



Class of 2007 Cross Threshold to Independence and Opportunity

Sixteen Threshold graduates received diplomas at the 2007 commencement ceremony on May 4, 2007. These highly motivated young adults with various learning challenges and other special needs spent the past two years following a path to become independent adults. They felt that going to college would make this possible, and the faculty in the Threshold Program helped them realize and hone their personal ambitions.

"This is no easy ride," said James Wilbur, Director of the Threshold Program. "But everyone rose to the occasion and we're really proud of them." Wilbur introduced President Margaret McKenna, president of Lesley University, who after nearly 22 years of service will be stepping down. "President McKenna leaves an extraordinary legacy of leadership at Lesley. She is close to our hearts for her unwavering support of Threshold as an integral part of the University," Wilbur said.

In addressing the graduates, President McKenna said, "Success is accepting who you are, your strengths, your weaknesses, and making the most of it. That is success. That is a successful person and you have all done that." In referring to her departure after so many years, President McKenna said that the Threshold program and its graduates would remain one of her most



Graduates L-R: Brandon Winkler, Eddie Shields and Kristen Beaver (recipients of the Judith Kranes Award), Blake Reef, Wendy Ryer, Adam Young

meaningful experiences. "It is this program and what you have done and do that is the model for me in what true success really is in overcoming obstacles and succeeding."

Student speakers Ani Chickering, Jessie Fire, Kristyle Hale, Jessica Miller and Lindsay Teehan addressed the audience of proud friends and family. Their words prompted tears and laughter from the crowd. Teehan captured the sentiment of many of her fellow graduates in her remarks. "In my two years at Threshold I have learned so much. I have learned how to travel in a city that at one time scared me to death. I learned how to deal with my disability realizing that I can do whatever I put my mind to. I may not be as good at reading or math as others, but I learned working hard, having a good head on my shoulders and being responsible are good tools toward success."

Two students in particular were recognized for displaying the vision of the Threshold Program. Board of Trustees member, Patricia Squire, presented Kristen Beaver and Eddie Shields with the Judith Kranes award for their leadership, motivation, and academic achievement.

Long time program advocate Carol Streit, Associate Provost and Vice President of Enrollment Management, addressed the graduates and their families as well. She spoke about luck and what role it may or may not play in one's life. "Luck doesn't make things happen, you do. That is what you learned at Threshold. By trying hard and taking risks, by realizing that if you make a mistake it's okay. By being patient, and persistent, by believing in yourself you can make things happen." In her final remarks she said, "Take a look around you, and savor this moment. It is because of you, because you made it happen." ❖

Jim Wilbur Receives Impact Award!

This past December, at the Lesley University holiday party and awards ceremony, President McKenna presented four faculty and staff members with Impact Awards in recognition of their contributions to the Lesley Community. The awards are presented annually to University faculty and staff who have played an exemplary role in the institution's mission of preparing men and women for careers that make a positive difference in the lives of others.



"Every year we have more worthy candidates than we have awards to give," said President McKenna. "This year's four recipients all especially exemplify the values of our university."

This year Jim Wilbur, Director of the Threshold Program was chosen among those to be honored. Jim has been at Lesley for 15 years, throughout which, he "has been instrumental in helping hundreds of challenged students succeed and trust that they can live as independent adults," McKenna said.

Alumni Corner

By Cheri Candelori, Class of 1996
Threshold Gazette Alumni Correspondent

Hey Everybody!!

I'm sorry I missed anyone who attended the March 31 Reunion and April 1st Brunch. I just wasn't able to make it this year. I hope that everyone is doing well, and I hope you will all keep in touch with me at my e-mail address cheri@alwaysajerseygirl.net. Please pass on the word to other Threshold Alums about this Website... You can e-mail any "Threshold Alumni Correspondence" to threshold@thresholdalumwebcafe.net.

Here's is one example of an alum who has used the website to keep in touch.

Yousuf (Joe) Islam, Class of 1996

I moved back home from Boston in July of 2002 and have been living in Saudi Arabia with my Mom and two sisters. Sadly, my father passed away November 2005. I'm currently working for Saudi Airlines, Catering Dept. and was promoted from English Supervisor to Administrative Supervisor in March of 2006. I'm also finally an owner of a vehicle, which is something I missed having access to in Boston. I like the freedom of being single, and independent...it's nice to come and go as I please. I only wish I had more of an opportunity to do more cooking while living here at home. That is just one of my favorite things I was able to take away from Threshold. I enjoy taking vacations to London and California. I hope to get the chance to attend the next Threshold Reunion. You can e-mail me at ysiinbos@aim.com, if you wish to get in contact with me.

The Threshold Program
Lesley University
29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138-2790



Graduation 2007

Threshold Graduation 2007 and Student Speakers L-R: Lindsay Teehan, Ani Chickering, Jessie Fire, Krystle Hale, and Jessica Miller.

