

# The Guidance Center of Westchester

# TIMES

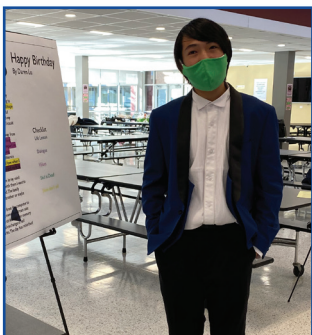
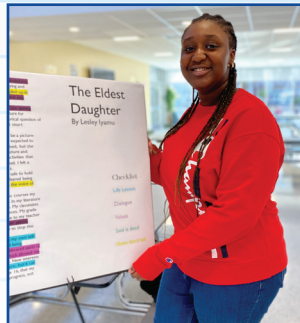
Spring  
2023

## COLLEGE ESSAY SHOWCASE

**D**awn Barrett, college and career counselor, helps students enrolled in the Center for College & Careers from Mount Vernon High School dig deep to create stirring and memorable college essays. Ms. Barrett has students focus on key elements such as the hook, show don't tell, dialogue, values, and emotions.

During this school year, the students also hosted an essay showcase day where they gave presentations about their essays. This helps them practice public speaking and presentation skills.

As we are preparing this newsletter, the students are still waiting on acceptances and making decisions. We're proud to share that they have been accepted to SUNY Binghamton, SUNY Polytechnic, SUNY Albany, SUNY Stony Brook, Penn State University, Manhattanville College, University of Rochester, Alfred University, Drexel University, Fordham University, University of Massachusetts, Syracuse University, and others.



The class Salutatorian, **Lesley Iyamu** (above), will attend Columbia University on a full scholarship. The class Valedictorian, **Daren Lu** (left), is weighing options between SUNY Purchase and University of Rochester. Both are participants in the CCC.

Excerpts from the essays are here, but you can find complete work on our website ([www.TheGuidanceCenter.org](http://www.TheGuidanceCenter.org)). *(continued on page 2)*

## PROS POEM



### MY GUIDANCE TO GREATFULNESS

I have a mental illness problem,  
This I already know.  
As I walk down the street.  
I wonder if my illness will show.  
I feel like people are looking at me.  
Mocking me because I can feel it,  
I can see.  
But could this be my mental illness  
Messing with me?  
I look across the street and  
Low and behold  
There's a place for people like me  
And the name is PROS.  
So I'll go there and give it a try  
Maybe with their help, I can kiss  
mental illness goodbye.  
The answer is here;  
it's on the tip of my nose,  
I'm grateful for The Guidance Center  
And their program, PROS.

*Kim J.*

The Guidance Center of Westchester

256 Washington Street • Mount Vernon, NY 10553 • 914-613-0700 • [TheGuidanceCenter.org](http://TheGuidanceCenter.org)



FROM THE CEO

For years, The Guidance Center and the Access Network have taken a trauma-informed approach to providing care to the people we serve. We've seen the positive impact this has on recovery, engagement, and outcomes.

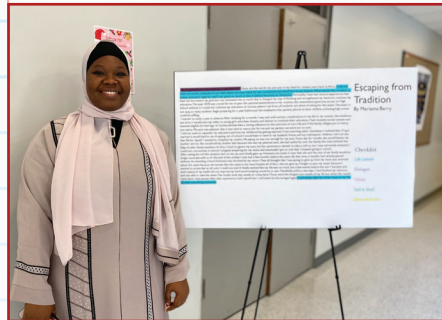
Our Trauma Informed Care committee is co-chaired by Shawna Aarons-Cooke, LCSW-R from TGCW and Rae Rivera, LCSW from Access: Supports for Living and includes staff from different programs and administrative departments. They ensure our approach extends beyond the clinical and encompasses how we engage with every person we support, their family and friends, and each other. It is all of our responsibilities to ensure that from the moment someone walks through our doors, they feel safe, heard, and seen.

It is one of many initiatives we are implementing across the Access Network. Others include community education (more on that on page 3), Zero Suicide, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging initiatives. We will keep you updated as these initiatives progress.

*Ronald Colavito*

Ronald Colavito  
President & CEO

# COLLEGE ESSAY SHOWCASE



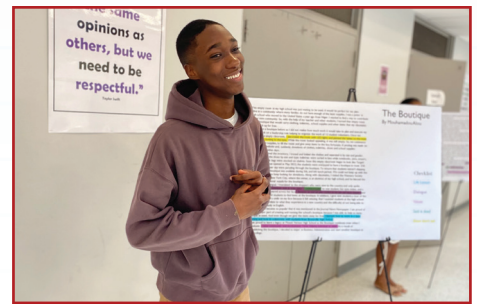
*"At 16 girls should stop studying to get married." These are the words my aunt put in my head for sixteen years back in Africa. In life we often encounter obstacles in our lives where we must stand by our convictions and stand firm in our dreams. When we do this, it makes us braver and more eager*

*to reach our goals, so much so that it almost becomes an obsession. Personally, I have had several experiences that have led me toward my goal, but one motivated me so much that it changed my way of thinking and strengthened my desire to continue my education...*

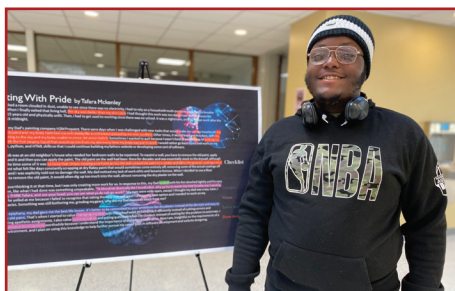
*— essay by M. Barry*

This empty room in my high school was just waiting to be used. It would be perfect for my plan.

I live in a community where many families do not have enough of the basic supplies. I was a junior in high school who moved to the United States a year ago from Niger. I wanted to find a way to contribute to my new community. So, with the help of my teacher and other students, I turned that empty room into a boutique that would carry clothing, toiletries, school supplies and other items that my classmates could pick up for free...



*— essay by M. Alou*



I approached a room clouded in dust, unable to see since there was no electricity. I had to rely on a household multi-purpose respirator to breathe properly. When I finally exited that living hell, the sky was darker than my skin color. I had thought this

*work was too dangerous and strenuous for someone 15 years old and physically unfit. Then I had to pull myself together and get used to it since I had nothing to do on weekends and days without school...*

*— essay by T. McKenley*

# SUICIDE PREVENTION & Mental Health Lifeline



**T**ogether, we can spread the word on 988, the easy-to-remember crisis line for anyone experiencing thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress.

According to SAMHSA, in 2020, the US had one death by suicide about every 11 minutes – and for people aged 10-34 years, suicide is a leading cause of death. 988 is free, confidential, available 24/7, and offered in

multiple languages. The line is also available via text.

## What's the difference between 911 and 988?

**988:** provides easy access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and related crisis resources. The goal of 988 is to meet the growing suicide and mental health-related crisis care needs.

**911:** dispatches Emergency Medical Services, fire, and police as needed.

TGCW also offers local, immediate resources through our walk-in services. These are available 9 AM – 4:30 PM, Monday – Friday at 256 Washington Street, Mount Vernon.

Join us in spreading the word about 988 and other resources. Follow us on social media and share our posts related to 988 and suicide prevention.

## LEARN WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

**D**id you know that the risk of suicide increases sharply in the spring? It's true. 60-90% of those who die by suicide communicate their intent to others, usually a family member or close friend.

What would you do if a loved one confides in you? Get comfortable talking about suicide. Take the FREE training offered by TGCW and the Access Network.

The QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer) course gives everyone the tools they need to be ready to help when someone expresses thoughts of self-harm.

You can find QPR training and other FREE community trainings at [www.TheGuidanceCenter.org/trainings](http://www.TheGuidanceCenter.org/trainings).

Upcoming QPR sessions are virtual and begin at noon: May 12, June 9, July 14 (more dates on the website and registration form). Registration is required.

We can also talk with you about scheduling a QPR or other training at your business, house of worship, or community group/organization. Reach out to: [community@asfl.org](mailto:community@asfl.org).

### WARNING SIGNS:

Talking about wanting to die, guilt, being a burden.

Feeling hopeless, trapped, extremely sad or anxious, full of rage, great pain.

Changing behavior, researching ways to die, withdrawing, giving away items, acting recklessly (driving fast, using drugs/alcohol).



The Guidance Center  
of Westchester  
256 Washington Street  
Mount Vernon, NY 10553



## 988 is here if you are:

- In Crisis
- Needing Emotional Support
- Struggling with Substance Use
- Feeling Suicidal
- Worrying About Someone



Office of  
Mental Health

**988** SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE

## TGCW'S WALK-IN CENTER

Monday-Friday  
9:00 AM - 4:30 PM  
256 Washington Street  
Mount Vernon, NY

### HELP LINE

888-TGCW-CAN  
888-842-9226

