CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF TASP

Your Generosity Inspires Tenderloin Students to Attend College

It was 1997 and a group of eight teenagers and TASP staff packed into a YMCA van for Los Angeles. With a small budget, TASP Program Manager, Denise Obrero, managed to visit two colleges for TASP’s first College Tour.

With your help, the College Tour program has introduced nearly 250 students to 88 schools in the last 20 years and made college a real possibility.

Previous TASP participant Aisha Robinson assumed she’d live at home, maybe attend a local community college, until she went on a tour with TASP. After visiting schools in Georgia, Washington D.C., and Louisiana, she was determined to attend a university.

“It really opened my mind,” she said. “My whole perspective changed.”

She was accepted into four schools and attended St. Augustine’s University in Raleigh, North Carolina. With a BA in Sociology, she now works as a caseworker in Hunter’s Point helping children and hopes to earn her MA in the future.

For many TASP students the College Tour is their first opportunity to learn about college life and the application process. It’s also often their first time traveling on an airplane or outside of San Francisco.

“Last year, which was my second college tour,” said Edward Freeman, TASP Program Coordinator, “half of the participants had never been on a plane before. So just sharing that experience with them was profound.”

To participate in the College Tour, students must attend a rigorous ten-week college workshop, meet a minimum GPA, and complete a series of assignments.

This year 26 students — more than double that of previous years — regularly attended the workshops. Out of the 26, a group of 15 flew to New York at the end of May. They visited four schools — New York University, Pratt Institute, Columbia University, and Eugene Lang College.

Students also had the opportunity to see some of what New York has to offer. They went to the Natural History Museum, biked through Central Park, and of course, tried a slice of NY’s famous pizza.
STUDENT PROFILE: Nidhi Patel

Like most high-school graduates moving away for college, Nidhi Patel had a mix of excitement and nerves. Last fall, she was off to Sonoma State University, looking forward to improving her Spanish and figuring out her major, but she was also moving to a brand new city several hours away from her family and friends in the Tenderloin.

But the trickiest part of all? Decorating her dorm room.

Nidhi, a TASP participant since 2010, got to know other participants and staff as well as a family. During move-in week, her parents were unable to get time off work so TASP staff lent Nidhi a few helping hands.

"TASP took me shopping for college. They got me matching bed sheets, a lamp, school supplies, and everything I needed to be ready for college. Not only did TASP get me things I needed, but they helped me move in," said Nidhi. "Without TASP’s help, moving in would be so hard and even fitting in with other roommates."

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TASP has been alongside Nidhi since the beginning of her journey to Sonoma State. Through TASP’s College Tour program, she was able to visit schools across three different cities and see how big American colleges were in comparison to those in India where she grew up.

When she decided she wanted to go to school, TASP staff and volunteers were right beside her to help with applications to college, scholarships, and financial aid.

Her appreciation for TASP and love for the kids is bringing her back to work at TASP this summer. She’s already given a tour of Sonoma State to current participants.

Everyone’s favorite part of the visit according to Nidhi? The dorm rooms.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Anthony Castaños

Over the last seven and half years, volunteer Anthony Castaños has watched TASP kids go from elementary school to college. He has gotten to know students through their college application essays. He has helped Eduardo, fondly called “his protégé,” for seven years and saw him gain independence and move to San Jose State.

Four years ago, he met Nidhi, who spoke fluent Hindi and Gujarati, and he soon recognized the need to develop her English grammar. Now, she sends him essays from Sonoma State on occasion, and he’s always impressed by how much her writing has improved.

A self-declared left-brainer and Urban Studies graduate of UC Berkeley, Anthony has also seen his own communication and writing skills improve while at TASP. But above all, he has learned to be patient.

"Kids are everything," said Anthony, Associate Manager of Land Stewardship at the Save the Redwoods League, who can now see becoming a teacher in the future. In the meantime, he will continue volunteering at TASP as long as he lives in San Francisco. "I might be at TASP forever," said Anthony.

25 Years of TASP Fun Facts

TASP has helped over 5,000 kids grow in the last 25 years.

Your help supports over 240 kids a year for 6 days a week and 4 activities a day!

$75
Purchases arts and crafts supplies for the month

$250
Reffil the library with brand new books

$500
Covers 2 local field trips

$1,000
Purchases 10 new microscopes

$2,500
Supports the Kid Coding class for 5 years

$5,000
Funds a College Tour for 15 teenagers

Donate today at: tndc.org/donate

TASP is unique because of how long kids can attend the program. Kids from age seven to eighteen are welcome. Krish (pictured above) has benefited from TASP for over six years!

1. We’ve had over 300 dedicated and compassionate volunteer tutors in the past 25 years.

2. Partners of TASP have donated 21,875 holiday gifts to kids in the Tenderloin.

3. For 25 years, volunteer Janice Gonsalves has provided sandwich supplies and made over 30,000 sandwiches for TASP kids.

4. Kids at TASP speak ten different languages.

5. TASP’s pet turtle, Turtleneck, is 59 years old. Turtleneck was the TASP Program Manager Denise Obiero’s sister’s pet turtle in the 1980s until he was brought to TASP in 1994.

6. The top three games at TASP are Mancala, Spot It, and Speed.

7. In 1993, Vietnamese was the most common non-English language spoken at TASP. Now, Arabic and Farsi are the most common.

8. Escape From New York Pizza has served 25,000 sandwiches for TASP kids.

9. Barney the Dinosaur was at TASP’s grand opening in August 1993.

10. The oldest original participant is now 37 years old. Past participants regularly sign up their children for TASP and continue the legacy.