

Barnstable Public Schools

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Barnstable Public Schools Celebrate Robust Community Mentor Program



*Members of the Barnstable High School Community Mentor Team: (from left to right) Barnstable High School's Youth Development Coordinator Lee "Doc" Docherty, David Adams, Kalyani Clarke, Dom Aidukaitis, and Jason Gourdine.
(Photo Courtesy Barnstable Public Schools)*

BARNSTABLE — Superintendent Sara Ahern is pleased to announce that Barnstable High School's (BHS) Community Mentor Program has been an effective tool in bridging the gap between struggling students and a successful future.

"The program has been running since approximately September 2023 and was created to help combat violence in the community after local gun violence that involved Cape Cod students," said Lee "Doc" Docherty, Barnstable High School's Youth Development Coordinator.

After several community discussions, community leaders and the school district collaborated their efforts to assemble a team of mentors to work with at-risk students. The new team included Docherty, as well as community members David Adams, Jason Gourdine, Willie Ford, Tara Vargas Wallace, Kalyani Clarke and Dom Aidukaitis.

“Our team works throughout the schools in the district and are referred students on an individual basis,” Docherty said. “We provide mentorship and connect students and families to resources to help them overcome challenges that might be standing in their way to achieving academic success.”

The program has also identified potential mentors from within the student body.

“We have also created a program to develop student mentors, who connect with their younger peers across the school district,” Docherty said. “Our team also works with MCI Norfolk and Suffolk University to explore the school-to-prison pipeline and has been leading professional development and community discussions on how the school system can help prevent crime in our local region.”

Barnstable Community Mentor Tara Vargas Wallace, Founder, CEO, & President of AmplifyPOC Cape Cod, has witnessed firsthand the program’s positive impact.

“The community mentor program with the Barnstable School District and (MCI) Norfolk prison exemplifies the transformative power of restorative justice,” she said. “By bridging the gap between incarcerated individuals and young people, the program fosters authentic connections, understanding and healing. It challenges harmful narratives, promotes accountability, and offers a path toward redemption and resilience.”

The mentoring program’s goals include increasing a positive and safe school culture based on the school’s core values; enhancing student-staff relationships; supporting at-risk students; increasing the diversity of adult role models from communities that are currently underrepresented in the faculty and staff; and strengthening community connection to the school.

“This initiative not only addresses the root causes of harm but also cultivates a culture of empathy, trust and support — planting seeds of change that ripple across families and our community as a whole,” said Vargas Wallace. “These efforts remind us that true justice is not about punishment but restoration and hope. I see the impact we’re making with the youth every day, and I’m honored to be doing this work and to be a part of this team.”

Barnstable Community Mentor David Adams, a Hyannis native and Barnstable High School alumnus (1996 Class President), also belongs to local community group People Of Action.

“Relationships play a powerful role in youth development,” said Adams. “Students gain practical, applicable advice that might not be taught in the classroom. Mentorship is also free. It affords students access to a crucial resource for development that’s not hidden behind a financial barrier. Mentorship is available to every student. The most rewarding part of being a mentor is witnessing the positive impact you have on a student’s life, fostering their growth as young people.”

Kalyani Clarke works as a professional career nanny, childcare educator and advocate and entrepreneur. She started as a Community Mentor at BHS this year.

“To me, community mentorship plays a crucial role in supporting youth by building their confidence, providing guidance and fostering a sense of belonging,” Clarke said. “Mentors help develop essential life skills, offer career and educational advice, and serve as emotional support, while also connecting mentees to valuable networks and opportunities.”

Clarke believes the Community Mentor Program works to benefit all students in Barnstable Public Schools.

“These programs are beneficial not just for ‘at-risk’ youth, but for all young people seeking guidance,” Clarke said. “Community mentorship is a long-term, reciprocal relationship that emphasizes trust and commitment, helping youth navigate challenges and make informed decisions for their futures. I can think back to all of the mentors I’ve had and still have in my life. In many ways, it was those people who gave me permission to believe in myself.”

Community Mentor Jason Gourdine said he has been “mentoring our youth for a very long time.”

“So being able to have access to a large number of our students in one location allows me to give more support and guidance that our youth don’t have,” Gourdine added. “For us to be at the school consistently gives them hope and comfort. The public needs to know what the Mentor Program brings to the table and that all the

students can benefit from having their community there to talk to and help them through their days at school and outside of school.”

Superintendent Ahern believes the BHS Community Mentor Program highlights the best of both the schools and the town.

“It’s difficult to calculate how many lives this mentoring program has touched and changed,” said Superintendent Ahern. “The mentoring process offers so much to our students. And I believe it can really make a difference in their lives, and the lives of their mentors. Thank you so much to everyone who has worked so hard to make this program a huge success.”

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Community Mentor Jason Gourdine offers guidance to Barnstable High School junior Beatrice Alves. (Photo Courtesy Barnstable Public Schools)



*Barnstable High School's Youth Development Coordinator Lee "Doc" Docherty speaks with Barnstable High School students Caleb Garcia, a junior, and Tiffany Miranda, a senior, as part of the District's Community Mentor Program.
(Photo Courtesy Barnstable Public Schools)*



Barnstable High School Community Mentors David Adams and Jason Gourdine speak with students after a recent mentoring session. (Photo Courtesy Barnstable

A message from Barnstable Public Schools

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