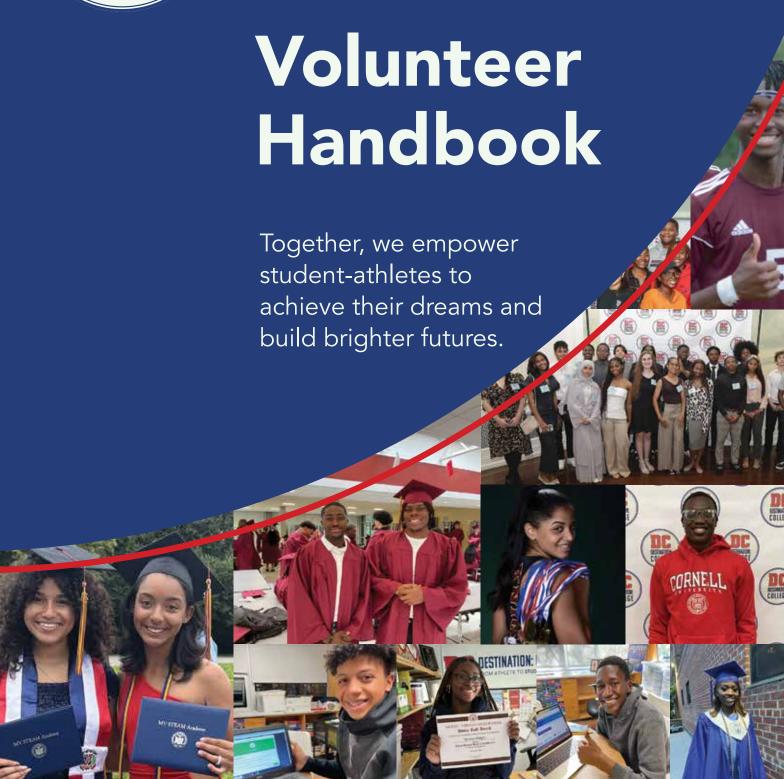


DESTINATION: COLLEGE

From Athlete to Student Athlete



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

EMAIL

info@destinationcollegeny.org

MAILING ADDRESS

Destination: College 81 Pondfield Road, # 290 Bronxville, New York, 10708

WEBSITE

www.destinationcollegeny.org

FACEBOOK DestinationCollegeNY

INSTAGRAM Destination collegeny

STAFF

SUZANNE McCANN INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

smccann@destinationcollegeny.org

SASKYA MOLINA

DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE PROGRAMS

smolina@destinationcollegeny.org

LOCATION

ALL PROGRAMS

Mount Vernon High School 100 California Road, Mount Vernon, NY 10708

Volunteers should enter at the main entrance under the canopy at the front of the school, named "Exit 2".

Please bring a government issued ID to check in at security.

PARKING

In front of the school and to the left of the gym.

2025/26 PROGRAM SCHEDULE & LOCATIONS

Note:

Programs do not meet on public school holidays, during school vacations and game days. The Director of College Programs will provide this information.

MONDAY

TEAM READS

 3:15 – 4:15 MVHS LIBRARY
 MV Football, Boys Swimming, Wrestling, Baseball

3:15 – 4:15 ROOM 110
 MV Girls Volleyball, Swimming

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

• 3:15 - 4:30 MVHS Library

TUESDAY

TEAM READS

3:15 – 4:15 ROOM 122
 MV Boys Basketball

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

• 3:15 – 4:30 MVHS Library

WEDNESDAY

TEAM READS

3:15 – 4:15 ROOM TBD
 MV Girls Basketball, Girls Soccer,
 Girls Track, Cheerleading

3:15 – 4:15 ROOM 112
 MV Boys Soccer, Boys Track

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

3:15 – 4:30 MVHS LIBRARY

THURSDAY

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

• 3:15 - 4:30 MVHS LIBRARY

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WELCOME

Our mission is to facilitate college readiness for economically disadvantaged student athletes through persistent mentoring and academic tutoring, to assist with all aspects of the college admissions and the financial aid process, and to support our students towards successful completion of college.

Thank you very much for joining the Destination: College (DC) team. Volunteers are the mainstay of our programs. Your time and efforts are valuable and empowering resources. Working with our student athletes can be a wonderful and fulfilling experience. We appreciate your willingness to volunteer and we look forward to working with you.

This handbook provides an overview of our organization and explains what it means to be a Destination: College volunteer. Please read this handbook carefully and contact our Executive Director should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Nancy McKenna

Nancy McKenna
Founder and Board Chair

OUR HISTORY

Destination: College is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization. Our mission, which began in earnest in 2006, started with a small weekly reading program for a group of 10 volunteers working with 25 boys on the Mount Vernon boys varsity basketball team. The goal was to help these boys improve their academic performance. From that humble beginning, Destination: College has grown to involve over 70 volunteers who work with multiple sports teams from all three high schools in Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon High School, Denzel Washington School of the Arts, and Mount Vernon STEAM Academy.

Building academic skills for our students is our primary focus. Our dedicated volunteers consistently show up and provide students with individual attention.

We work in partnership with the sports teams. Through our network of local volunteers, we provide academic support, comprehensive college application assistance, and college success guidance to all our student athletes. We continue to mentor our students in college, as data strongly suggests higher graduation rates when students receive early transition guidance and consistent support. Our academic enrichment and college access programs annually reach over 200 high school students, while our college retention program supports over 150 college students.

In the past, Destination: College has operated programs at various high schools in Westchester County.





GOALS & IMPACT



The goals of Destination: College are: to ensure that all our students, regardless of athletic skill, can be accepted to a college of their choice that is suited to their financial needs and aligns with their strengths and interests; to provide all our students with the opportunity to qualify for scholarships for which they may be eligible.

Many Destination: College students come from families (like most families) overwhelmed by the college application process. Often, these students are first-generation college students. English may not be their primary language, food and housing insecurity may be concerns, and higher education may not be a priority or even a plan. Destination: College aims to help these students reach the next level.

Through the efforts of our dedicated volunteers who work with each participating team, Destination: College sends a new group of students to universities and colleges every year. Since 2007, our students have been accepted to a wide range of prestigious institutions across the country, including Cornell, Howard University, Rutgers University, the University of Pennsylvania, Hobart and William Smith, West Point, and many SUNY schools, including the University at Albany, Binghamton University, and Stony Brook University.

Given the high cost of college today, we frequently encourage our students to consider SUNY schools, including community colleges and the City College of New York (CUNY) system.

While building academic skills for our students is our main priority, an added benefit is the undeniable relationship that evolves from volunteer commitment to student success.

ill put forth

SCHOOLS, SCHEDULE & LOCATIONS

MOUNT VERNON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

- DENZEL WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
- MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL
- MOUNT VERNON STEAM ACADEMY

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

- BOYS BASKETBALL
- GIRLS BASKETBALL
- BASEBALL
- FOOTBALL
- FLAG FOOTBALL
- SOFTBALL
- BOYS SOCCER
- GIRLS SOCCER
- WRESTLING
- BOYS TRACK & FIELD
- GIRLS TRACK & FIELD
- BOYS SWIMMING
- GIRLS SWIMMING
- VOLLEYBALL
- CHEERLEADING
- BOYS TENNIS
- GIRLS TENNIS

PROGRAM SCHEDULE & LOCATIONS

MONDAY

TEAM READS

- **3:15 4:15 MVHS LIBRARY**MV Football, Boys Swimming,
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COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

3:15 – 4:30 MVHS LIBRARY

THURSDAY

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

3:15 – 4:30 MVHS LIBRARY

VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT

Volunteers are matched with teams based on demand and availability. If interested in a particular sport or subject, volunteers should contact the Executive Director or Program Head. Most volunteers serve one-hour weekly sessions with an athlete group, but many assist multiple teams.

Throughout the academic year, we facilitate weekly one-hour academic enrichment sessions for selected athletic teams in our Team Reads program. These sessions are held Monday through Wednesday from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. During each session, Academic Coaches (volunteers) are assigned groups of two to four students. The curriculum is comprised of short documentary videos, relevant reading materials, critical thinking discussion prompts, and occasional guest speakers. Current events topics include sports, music, and politics, supporting both content knowledge development and relationship-building. Consistency is maintained within reading groups over the course of the year.

Academic Coaches may also provide subjectspecific tutoring upon student request. Our comprehensive library of materials and online resources are available to tutor use.

Each sports team is supported by a designated Program Head, who collaborates directly with the respective team coach. The Program Head oversees all aspects of Team Reads operations, including scheduling meetings, organizing volunteers and students, communicating essential information to volunteers, and managing logistics such as meeting locations. Program Heads typically distribute weekly emails regarding tutor availability, snack coordination, volunteer assignments, and other relevant updates. Should questions, issues, or concerns arise, the Program Head serves as the primary point of contact.

TEAM READS

SEPTEMBER - MAY

During the academic year we conduct weekly one-hour academic enrichment sessions for some of the sports teams with whom we work. The sessions occur on Monday – Wednesday from 3:15 - 4:15pm. At a typical session, Academic Coaches (volunteers) are assigned a group of two to four students. Our curriculum content is a mix of short documentary videos, relevant reading articles, critical thinking discussion questions, and occasional guest speakers. Our current events content includes sports, and politics with the goal of building knowledge and relationships. We strive to maintain continuity within reading groups throughout the year.

An Academic Coach can also facilitate subject tutoring for students who request it. We have a library of materials and online resources for tutor use.

Each Team Reads team is assigned a Program Head who works directly with the individual team coach. The Program Head is responsible for general organization and supervision of the Team Reads Program, including setting the overall meetings schedule, organizing volunteers and students, communicating with volunteers, and handling any required logistics. Program Heads typically send out weekly emails to gauge tutor availability, to communiate the snack schedule, volunteer assignments and other pertinent information. The Program Head is the "go to" person for any questions, issues, or concerns.

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

SEPTEMBER - JUNE

Under the guidance of the Director of College Programs, our team of College Center volunteers works closely with our current and rising seniors to facilitate their college application processes, including identifying appropriate colleges, Common Application assistance, essay writing and editing, resume preparation, help with completing financial aid FAFSA/scholarship applications and general support. Including occasional communication with college coaching staff. Our volunteers commit 2-3 hours a week to work with students and meet on Monday -Thursday (3:15-4:30pm) in the Mount Vernon High School Library and virtually as needed. Destination: College provides volunteer group training on the College Application Process and Financial Aid each year as needed.

PEER TUTOR PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER - JUNE SUBJECT & REGENTS PREP

We coordinate a Peer Tutor program for our student-athletes to work one-on-one with a volunteer student tutor who possesses a high level of subject mastery.

This program is offered weekly at the Mount Vernon High School library Monday-Thursday from 3:15 – 4:45pm. If mutually convenient, we coordinate Zoom sessions for students who are unable to meet during our in-person sessions.

JEFF COONEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In 2013, Destination: College established a scholarship program for outstanding seniors based on weekly program participation, academics, leadership, grit, and coach recommendation. In 2018, the scholarship was formally named The Jeff Cooney Memorial Scholarship to honor our late board member Jeff Cooney. Cooney Scholars receive a one-time award intended to support college related expenses. Scholarships are awarded each June.

COLLEGE SUCCESS MENTOR PROGRAM

Our Director of College Programs works closely with our DC alumni on college campuses. One on one guidance, group seminars and visits to college campuses are offered to ensure the success of our students. We provide our DC Alumni with College Success Stipends for books, technology, dorm supplies, and additional course needs to alleviate some of the financial burden that cause financially challenged students to abandon their college careers.

We have a volunteer driven mentoring program to give guidance to many of our college students to ensure persistence to graduation. Our mentors and students work together for at least the first two years of college, communicating to discuss transition to school, healthy habits, resources for academic success, budgeting, etc. Our Director of College Programs facilitates summer training and follow up meetings with mentors to provide relevant information and share best practices.



VOLUNTEER PROTOCOLS & BEST PRACTICES

VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

- **We ask** that each volunteer commit a minimum of one (1) hour per week during the school year; this may vary when a team is in season.
- We understand a tutor's need for flexibility, and we strive to accommodate everyone's schedule.
- Team Reads program heads are responsible for notifying volunteers of the assigned classroom and location.
- **Our students** feel valued with your consistent involvement, and we encourage you to attend their sporting events when convenient.
- **Our students** notice when you are there to cheer them on.
- Volunteers provide a snack for students at the beginning of each session to give them the necessary fuel to keep their attention during the session.
- **It is the responsibility** of the Program Head to coordinate snacks, and he or she may ask for help from the volunteers each week.
 - **At the end of the session**, Destination: College provides pizza before the students head to practice or training.
- **All volunteers** are asked to attend a Volunteer Orientation held in early September of each year. We typically meet on a weekday morning from 9:00 -11:00am. Guidelines, best practices and group discussion are the headline topics on our agenda.

EXPECTATIONS OF A VOLUNTEER

A volunteer is expected to:

- **Report on time** on the days you volunteer
- Notify your Program Head in a timely fashion if you are unable to volunteer on the days or at the times you have been assigned
- Be careful, prudent and avoid any careless and reckless behavior while performing assignments
- **Be dependable** and prompt
- **Be able** to relate well to a variety of people
- Have good listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- **Be flexible,** friendly, patient, and optimistic. Have a good sense of humor
- Keep confidential all information about
 Destination: College, its staff, the school staff,
 the students and its other volunteers.
- Treat all Destination: College staff, school staff, students and other volunteers, with respect and courtesy without regard to age, creed, color, disability, familial status, gender identity, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law
- Do not facilitate or engage in any form of harassment
- Agree to a background screening, which is required of all Destination: College volunteers (to be paid for by Destination: College)
- **Sign the** Destination: College Volunteer Release that will be provided electronically.

CODE OF CONDUCT

To provide the best possible tutoring environment, Destination: College expects volunteers to conduct themselves in a way that will protect the safety of all students and volunteers, and the interests of the organization.

Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Fighting or threatening violence
- Boisterous or disruptive behavior
- Sexual or other unlawful harassment

CONFIDENTIALITY

Destination: College recognizes that student academic information is private.

Should a student, coach or school employee share academic information with our Program Heads or volunteers, this information must not be shared outside this relationship to protect a student's privacy and dignity.

VOLUNTEER STATUS

The relationship between volunteer and Destination: College is "at will," which means that either the volunteer or Destination: College can terminate the volunteer's service at any time, for any reason whatsoever, with or without cause.

Volunteers are not employees and are not entitled to compensation or any form of employee benefit.

DISMISSAL POLICY

Any volunteer violating the Destination: College Code of Conduct will be subject to immediate dismissal.

BOUNDARIES

It is our role to provide academic skill building in a safe environment for both volunteers and students. It is very important that our volunteers maintain proper boundaries with our students. Inappropriate relationships with students are expressly prohibited, and Destination: College reserves the right to terminate any volunteer for engaging in such a relationship.

Some students may ask for additional tutoring outside the Destination: College established sessions. The Executive Director can facilitate additional time and locations and should be aware if a tutor coordinates additional time. A school location is strongly encouraged with a public library or other public space (restaurant, coffee shop, etc.) being an acceptable alternative.

The door of any classroom used within the school should always remain open during sessions.

- Never tutor at a student's home or in your own home
- Never provide transportation to a student
- Please refrain from giving any student money unless for team fundraising efforts under the supervision of a coach. Donating to a team cause is entirely up to a volunteer and is in no way mandated by Destination: College.

Texting is an acceptable form of communicating with students and is known to help students by giving them a source of encouragement. Please exercise appropriate language and monitor how a teenager or parent-guardian can interpret conversations. Do not use any terms of endearment or language (including emojis) that cross a professional line.



VOLUNTEER PROTOCOLS & BEST PRACTICES

COACH INVOLVEMENT

At least one coach is requested to be on-site during tutoring sessions to ensure student attendance and proper behavior.

Classroom doors are to be left open. It is important that doors be open for assurance of safety and integrity of the student-tutor pairing, especially in instances where there may be only one pair in a room.



INSURANCE

Destination: College does not maintain health, medical or disability insurance coverage for its volunteers. Also, since you are not a Destination: College Employee, you are not covered by any workers' compensation insurance for any injuries you may sustain while volunteering with Destination: College.

LAST MINUTE PROGRAM CHANGES & COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

While rare, programs may be canceled at the last minute due to inclement weather, activity conflict, or other unforeseen circumstances.

Given the number of volunteers that come to DC programs on any given day, texts and emails are the most efficient way to relay last minute changes.

- Executive Director is on the school district automated call and email distribution list.
- Coaches may make changes and communicate with the Program Leader and Executive Director
- Program Leader and the Executive Director keep volunteer email and cell info up to date.
- Program Leader will send notification by email of unexpected change
- Executive Director will send notification to affected volunteers through text
- It is the responsibility of, and it is important for the volunteer to check emails and texts when heading to DC programs



FEEDBACK

Feedback is a welcome part of the success and growth of our programs and organization.

We value your opinion and hope you will feel comfortable sharing your ideas, challenges and program-related needs with either your Program Head, Executive Director or Board Chair.

As our volunteers work closely with our student athletes, they may be party to privileged information. A student may share sensitive information about issues and concerns in their personal lives. If a situation arises where you do not feel comfortable or you have questions/concerns about a child's safety, immediately notify your Program Head, the Executive Director, or Board Chair.





VOLUNTEER TIPS

TEAM READS

DC ACADEMIC COACH: Tips, Strategies, and notes for Reading Groups

- Introduce yourself to the group, tell them who you are and what kind of work you do or did.
- Use the ice breakers supplied by the Executive Director to develop a rapport with the students.
- Jot down the students names on your packet to help you remember with whom you are working.
- Printed packets of reading materials are delivered to the classroom for volunteers and students.
- Volunteers do not need to bring printed packets from home.
- Groups of 3-4 students are assigned to each DC Academic Coach (volunteer)
- Reading groups may be adjusted after sports season attrition/JV additions/new team additions.
- DO NOT feel pressure to finish packets.
 Discuss the article that resonates with your group.
- Ask students if they know anything about the story based on the title or byline.
- Students 'popcorn' read 3-4 paragraphs before the next reader picks up and starts.

- You can moderate the switch of readers if needed. Feel free to participate in the reading.
- If a student doesn't feel comfortable reading aloud he/she can pass.
- Pause the reading on occasion to check for understanding or to discuss context/ vocab.
- Feel free to use your own discussion questions or call out challenging vocabulary.
- Developing rapport and building trust are the top goals- if we build some critical thinking along the way bravo!
- The kids LOVE praise, find something to sincerely complement in each.
- Check to see if students need any subject help from DC - relay to your Program leader or ED if student makes a request.
- Make your program leader aware of any day on which you will not be able to attend program.
- PROGRAMS DO NOT MEET ON PUBLIC SCHOOL HOLIDAYS/VACATIONS/GAME DAY – Program Leaders will relay info as needed.
- Enjoy the students, they are great!

COONEY COLLEGE CENTER

Tips, Strategies, and notes

- Introduce yourself to the group, tell them who you are and what kind of work you do or did.
- You initially will shadow a more experienced volunteer, ask questions during the program or at the end of each session. The Director of College Programs (DCP) and the Executive Director (ED) are also available to you.
- Read through the binder of important forms that are used within college center.
- Be receptive to the students' ideas about essay and college wish list – edit both gently and encouragingly.
- Some students need a jump start to writing, encourage them to write bullet points to get writing going.
- The essay should have the student's voice.
- Familiarize yourself with FAFSA and TAP

 you will receive guidance on how to
 complete student forms.
- Help identify EOP/HEOP, SEEK and DREAM scholarship students.
- Make sure all students apply to SUNY and CUNY schools during free application week.

- Recap each session with each student to ensure that you and he/she are on the same page and discuss what needs to happen next in order to stay on track.
- Encourage students to add password to their tracker, write down password in their folder and take screen shots.
- Developing rapport and building trust are the top goals.
- The kids LOVE praise, find something to sincerely complement in each.
- Make DCP aware of progress and any red flags.
- PROGRAMS DO NOT MEET ON PUBLIC SCHOOL HOLIDAYS/VACATIONS/GAME DAY
 DCP will provide this information.



VOLUNTEER RELEASE

In exchange for the value and benefit of services received, including the opportunity to serve as a volunteer with Destination: College, a New York not-for-profit corporation having an address of 81 Pondfield Road, Bronxville, New York 10708 (the "Organization"), I have read, understand, and willingly sign this release (the "Release").

As a volunteer with the Organization, I may participate in certain "Volunteer Activities", defined herein as providing one or more students, introduced to me by the Organization ("Participating Students"), with tutoring, homework assistance, or assistance with the college application process (collectively, the "Volunteer Activities"). I understand that Volunteer Activities may only take place in "Approved Locations", defined as restaurants, coffee shops, libraries, shopping malls, and the following school: Mount Vernon High School 100 California Road, Mount Vernon, NY 10552.

I acknowledge that my participation in the Volunteer Activities has certain inherent risks, which risks I voluntarily assume. These risks include, but are not limited to, the risk of economic loss and/or physical injury, resulting from: (1) travel, by vehicle or otherwise, arising from my participation in the Volunteer Activities; (2) the acts and/or omissions of Participating Students; (3) the acts and/or omissions of other third parties to this agreement, who may be present at the Approved Locations; and (4) physical, environmental, and/or other hazards present at the Approved Locations. I acknowledge that I am voluntarily participating in the Activities and have considered those risks. I hereby expressly and specifically assume such risks, including any and all risk of injury, harm, or loss that I may incur as a result of my participation in the Activities.

I hereby give consent and authority to the Organization to obtain medical treatment on my behalf if I am injured or require medical attention during my participation in the Activities. I understand and agree that I am solely responsible for all costs related to such medical treatment, medical transportation, and/or evacuation. I hereby release, forever discharge, and hold harmless the Organization from any claim whatsoever in connection with such treatment or other medical services.

I agree to follow any instructions given or rules established by the Organization or its employees or agents with regard to my participation in the Volunteer Activities. I acknowledge that the Volunteer Activities do not include: (1) providing transportation to any Participating Student without a Destination: College generated permission slip signed by a parent/guardian [1] or (2) tutoring any Participating Student other than at Approved Locations (items (1) and (2) collectively, "Prohibited Conduct"). I agree to refrain from any Prohibited Conduct.

I hereby indemnify, release, hold harmless and forever discharge the Organization and its agents, employees, officers, directors, affiliates, successors and assigns (collectively, the "Released Parties"), of and from any and all claims, demands, debts, contracts, expenses, causes of action, lawsuits, damages or liabilities, of any kind or nature, whether known or unknown, in law or in equity, that I ever had or may have, arising from or in any way related to my participation in the Volunteer Activities.

Notwithstanding the foregoing sentence, this Release does not limit the liability of the Released Parties with respect to any acts of gross negligence, or intentional, willful or wanton misconduct on their part.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS RELEASE DISCHARGES THE ORGANIZATION FROM ANY LIABILITY OR CLAIM THAT I MAY HAVE AGAINST THE ORGANIZATION WITH RESPECT TO ANY BODILY INJURY, PERSONAL INJURY, ILLNESS, DEATH, PROPERTY DAMAGE, OR PROPERTY LOSS THAT MAY RESULT FROM THE ACTIVITIES, WHETHER CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE ORGANIZATION OR OTHERWISE. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE ORGANIZATION DOES NOT ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR OR OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OR OTHER ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO MEDICAL, HEALTH, OR DISABILITY INSURANCE OF ANY NATURE IN THE EVENT OF MY INJURY, ILLNESS, OR DEATH, OR DAMAGE TO OR LOSS OF MY PROPERTY.

Additionally, I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Released Parties of and from any and all claims, demands, debts, contracts, expenses, causes of action, lawsuits, damages or liabilities, of any kind or nature, whether known or unknown, in law or in equity, that any third party ever had or may have, arising from or in any way related to my having engaged in Prohibited Conduct. Such indemnification shall include, but not be limited to, the reimbursement of all costs, expenses, reasonable attorney's fees, and judgments, incurred by or assessed against any of the Related Parties, arising from my having engaged in Prohibited Conduct.

This Release will continue in full force and effect even after the termination of my affiliation with the Organization, whether such termination occurs by agreement, by operation of law, or otherwise.

I understand and agree that during the Activities, I may be photographed and/or videotaped by the Organization for internal and/or promotional use. I hereby grant and convey to the Organization all right, title, and interest, including but not limited to, any royalties, proceeds, or other benefits, in any and all such photographs or recordings, and consent to the Organization's use of my name, image, likeness, and voice in perpetuity, in any medium or format, for any publicity without further compensation or permission.

This Release is governed by the laws of the State of New York and is intended to be as broad and inclusive as is permitted by that law. If any provision of this Release is held invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions will continue to be fully effective.

This Release contains the entire agreement between the undersigned parties regarding the subject matter of this Release and supersedes any prior written or oral agreements between them concerning the subject matter hereof.

The provisions of this Release may not be altered, in whole or in part, except by means of a writing bearing the signatures of the parties hereto. Any claim or controversy that arises out of or relates to this Release or the subject matter hereof shall be brought and heard exclusively in a court of competent jurisdiction located in the County of Westchester in the State of New York.

Volunteer Name:		
Address:		
Accepted and Agreed to this	day of	
Destination: College By:		
Volunteer Name:		
Signature:		
Parent Signature for High School Studen	t Volunteer Tutor under 18:	



Thank you to our Affiliate Partners



NewYork-Presbyterian
Westchester

























DESTINATION: COLLEGE