

Before I began Carleton Project, I had already given up on myself and my education. At just 15, I had already been to institutions and rehab, none of which gave me any guidance or clarity. On top of that, I had absolutely no desire to continue school, or work towards my future. It was already clear that public school had and would do nothing but make me feel like I was not good or smart enough, especially as a student with ADHD. Though still a child, I felt I had already reached an impasse. I am confident that if I hadn't started Carleton Project, I would never have overcome, or even survived.

In my experience with public education, such as Houlton High School, both the staff and the curriculum have extremely poor accommodations for individual student needs or differences; students falling behind are very often ignored or looked down upon rather than helped. Many of the staff seemed to care more about attendance and success than acting in the role of supportive figures in shaping the minds of students. Not to mention, much of the environment within HHS was very hostile, mostly due to scrutiny and abuse of peers that was rarely addressed by staff. After learning about Carleton Project, I instantly brought it up to the HHS principle (now former), where he informed me that they would probably not accept me because I lacked attendance and motivation, but he was willing to arrange a meeting. As soon as the meeting began, Alan had already accepted me with open arms. I hadn't yet realized how much that changed my life.

Alan, Carol, and Lily were always reliable and supportive figures, and provided a place to grow both personally and academically. They truly care about finding the best solution to support each student's success. Before Carleton Project, I would have never seen myself having such positive feelings and interactions towards teachers or school staff; but not long after attending Carleton Project, I deeply considered them all as family. Altogether, Carleton Project guided me to succeed in my education by allowing freedom to work at my own pace and explore more deeply into subjects I was especially interested in, by motivating me to be passionate about my success, by helping initiate the process of furthering my education, and much more. Alongside academic support, my experience in Carleton Project promoted both mental and psychological growth. I always felt safe and accepted and was able to form many great relationships with peers and staff and find the courage to step out of my shell.

Without Carleton Project, I would have never reached where I am today. Before their support and kindness, I did not even imagine myself graduating high school. Despite all doubts, Carleton project supported and motivated me to push myself above and beyond expectations, and I now stand as a college graduate, with a bachelor's in psychology at USM and further goals to expand my educational career in graduate school. It is very much an understatement when I say I will always be grateful for my experience in Carleton, and what it has done for me and my future.

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