

Breaking the Barriers

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PRESIDENT AND CO-FOUNDER,
BREAKING THE BARRIERS

Every day we are faced with barriers: walls of prejudice others put up, bricks that we build around ourselves setting our own limits and the glass box society places upon us. Now there is a new Ashland High School (AHS) club, Breaking the Barriers (BTB), which focuses on destroying these invisible walls in the Ashland community.

What is BTB?

BTB is a community service and leadership club supported by Drug Free Communities (DFC) funding, inspiring youth to make healthy choices and giving them the skills to become a leader. The goal of the club is to shatter the stereotypical mold of complacent teenagers and make a positive change in the lives of students through service activities and leadership. The main events for the club's first year include conducting a leadership program with the Mindess Student Council, planning a regional youth summit with the Metrowest Substance Abuse Prevention Alliance, volunteering at PTO-



BTB founders (Photo/submitted)

sponsored Kids Night Out, and attending the one-week CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) conference in Washington D.C. As the youth sector of the Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) Coalition, members will also be attending DAET meetings, dedicated to creating a safe and healthy Ashland by pre-

venting and solving problems that lead to youth substance abuse. Additionally, BTB will assist with the AHS Student Taking a Noble Direction (STAND) positive social norms campaign. BTB has a very busy and fun year planned and has sights set on having a leadership summit for AHS students and a workshop with Girl Scouts in the future.

and the Positivity Pandas, Breaking the Barriers, thankfully, won. This new name represents our re-defined vision for our leadership and community service-oriented club. An afternoon of glue, glitter and construction paper later, we had created our first Club Fair poster for the freshmen orientations held last June and August. At those two orientations, we received 38 emails from prospective members. From there, countless emails were exchanged between DEAT leaders, AHS administration and BTB club founders over the course of the summer. Soon it was time to put aside administrative work and make the club official! We had several founders' meetings to outline our club constitution, meetings with DAET heads to discuss the vision of the club, and a search for a qualified and passionate faculty advisor. Once all of that work was done, it was time for the real battle: publicizing the new club.

Pushing Through Barriers

Although, as president and co-founder of BTB, I can say that our path to becoming a fully established club wasn't easy. We faced our own hurdles and barriers, which we pushed through. In June, we proposed the name of our club to be STAND (after the Students Taking a Noble Direction campaign) at a DEAT meeting, and it was shut down due to various issues. Not succumbing to defeat, we began brainstorming new club names. After a tight race between Breaking the Barriers

Marketing the New Club

From speaking at the homecoming rally, to sneakily hanging posters on the back of bathroom stall doors for forced viewership, to being on the morning announcements, we were practically a marketing team. On our posters we advertised food at all meetings, building a youth leadership program, taking a week-long trip to D.C., and community service at every meeting and event.

Our publicity worked! We had our first official club meeting on Oct. 5 with around 40 students attending! The involvement was incredible, and we hope to see all those faces again. We are a new, growing club always looking for different opinions, so we always welcome new members. I believe that this is going to be the beginning of many successful years for BTB, and hope that our story inspires others to do what they are passionate about.

I would like to thank the other five founders of the club: Haley Boccuzzi (BTB publicist), Liz Cahill, Selma Chamime, Stephanie Moscaritolo and Annabelle Rutherford (BTB secretary). A special shout out to the amazing women at DEAT who have tirelessly helped us throughout this process: Elizabeth Byrnes, Betsy Emberly, Kristen French and Amy Turncliff. Also thanks to our wonderful AHS Principal, Kelley St. Coeur, who has always supported us. Last but not least, a huge thank you to our advisor, Lindsay Hogan, who always lends a hand and a bright smile and listens to the ramblings of us crazy founders! Please feel free to contact me at shabeerneh@ashland.k12.ma.us for any questions or comments about BTB.

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