



Minds Matter  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2015**

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During the school year, my Minds Matter mentors were a constant source of support, especially when I was overwhelmed and stressed about college applications. They let me know that I am good enough when I don't feel like I am. To know that I have people outside of my family that support me and want to see me succeed has given me the motivation to keep pushing myself. I want to make them – and myself – proud.”

-Nancy, Minds Matter NYC alumna and Wheaton College Class of 2019

## Dear Friends and Supporters:

Minds Matter transforms the lives of accomplished high school students from low-income families by broadening their dreams and preparing them for college success. Our students come from households where the average family income is less than \$24,000 and they have achieved an average GPA of 3.8. Outside of Minds Matter, opportunities for this population are far more limited as compared to their wealthier peers:

- High schools with predominantly low-income students have 1,000 students per counselor versus a national average of 471 students per counselor.
- 50% of our nation's high-achieving, low-income students do not apply to a single selective college or university.
- 75% of students at competitive colleges come from families with incomes in the top 25%, while less than 10% of students come from the bottom half.

Minds Matter is actively addressing these gaps, providing our students with the tools and resources they need to achieve college success, and realizing a 100% four-year college acceptance rate for our program graduates – with greater than 70% attending very, highly, or the most competitive colleges as defined by *Barron's*.

Minds Matter volunteers challenge our students, many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college, to create a new vision of themselves. Ours is an intense and rigorous program that works to help our students evolve in significant ways, allowing for deep and lasting change.

Our volunteers and students all invest a significant amount of

time, and our program offers experiences well beyond those of a standard college prep program. We are about helping students find their talent and potential, nurturing them to become not just college graduates, but those who can help shine the light for future generations.

Across the country, Minds Matter is powered by more than 1,700 extraordinarily dedicated volunteers and fewer than 10 paid staff nationwide. We run a lean shop, and that is reflected in the results of last year's independent ROI study. In 2015, we served 611 students – a 7% increase over 2014. In addition, we now have 1,257 program alumni, some of whom have earned roles on our staff and board.

As we ended fiscal year 2015, Minds Matter leaders from across the country gathered to begin charting the plan for our next phase of growth. Our meetings reinforced our shared vision for an entrepreneurial chapter network with a unified vision for programmatic excellence. We are eager to propel Minds Matter forward and look forward to continuing to serve our wonderful students.

On behalf of our students, volunteers and staff, thank you for your ongoing support of this very special organization.



G. Jonathan Bernstein  
Board Chair of Minds Matter

### Looking Ahead to Fiscal Year '16

- Ellen Magnis joins Minds Matter as Executive Director
- Minds Matter named by the prestigious 100 Women in Hedge Funds organization as its 2016 beneficiary

## Minds Matter Seattle Student: RASHA

Rasha, a junior at Minds Matter Seattle, is pursuing a career in medicine. Witnessing violence and war as a child in her home country of Iraq left Rasha wanting to do what she could to help the people there. Rasha explains, "They deserve a better life . . . I want to help care for people." Rasha grew up in Baghdad, Iraq, and spent nine years in Egypt before moving to the United States three years ago with her family, seeking a safer home and better education. She joined Minds Matter in 2014.

Rasha dreams of becoming a primary care doctor or surgeon, and Minds Matter's summer programs helped her pursue that passion. Rasha's Minds Matter Mentors helped her apply to attend the MultiCare Nurse Camp over the summer, to pursue her passion in the medical field. During the five-day camp, Rasha tested medical devices, practiced suturing, and shadowed professional nurses and other healthcare providers.

Attending high school in the United States without speaking any English was

initially a challenge for Rasha. But Rasha has proven her commitment to getting a quality education and achieving her dreams. Rasha explains that back in Iraq, it was sometimes dangerous to go to school and the teachers were very strict. She feels the teachers in the United States make learning fun, and she feels more interested in her own education now. Minds Matter Seattle President Ann Rubin says, "I believe Rasha has the patience and diligence to succeed." And Rasha is happy to be a part of Minds Matter. She says, "I think I'm getting the right education I deserve."

//

I want to  
help care  
for people"

-Rasha, Minds Matter Seattle  
Junior



Minds Matter  
transforms the lives  
of accomplished  
high school  
students from low-  
income families  
by broadening  
their dreams and  
preparing them for  
college success.



## What We Do

Minds Matter is a comprehensive and highly-successful three-year program that empowers young people from low-income families to achieve college readiness and success. Founded in New York City in 1991 by six Wall Street professionals who understood that the gap in low-income student achievement is not one of intelligence, but resources, Minds Matter has developed a successful program incorporating academics, mentoring, and enrichment experiences that prepare students for bright futures.

### Our Three-Year Program

Beginning in their sophomore year of high school, our students spend 4-6 hours per week during the school year in Minds Matter sessions with their volunteer mentors and instructors. Our **sophomore program** centers on cultivating the math and writing/critical thinking skills that are the foundation of our students' academic success. In the **junior program**, students work with their mentors on test preparation for the SAT and ACT standardized exams. During the summers after their sophomore and junior year, students attend summer enrichment programs at prep schools, colleges, and universities across the country and around the world. In the **senior program**, students work closely with their mentors on college applications, financial aid forms, financial literacy, and navigating the college application process. Our volunteers guide seniors through the college selection process, helping our students determine what school and area of study might be best for them.

Throughout the program, students gain confidence and ambition, strengthen their skills in writing, critical thinking, test-taking, and mathematics, and flourish into young adults who are ready and excited to succeed in college. Minds Matter proudly boasts a 100% success rate for students' acceptance into four-year colleges and universities.

# Who We Are

## Our Students

Each day, Minds Matter is inspired by the commitment and drive of the students we serve. Our students choose to spend 4-6 hours per week improving their academic abilities and preparing themselves for the future.

The average family income of our students is \$24,360, and nearly half of them live below the federal poverty line. They are typically the first in their family to attend college. Many of them want to become doctors and teachers; they're determined, focused, and fully aware of the value of higher education to their lifelong successes. It is impossible to not be impressed by these young people.

## Our Volunteers

Minds Matter could not exist without the dedication and commitment of more than 1,700 volunteers nationwide. Many of our mentors are working professionals who devote their time to enriching the lives of our deserving students. It is not uncommon for mentor/mentee relationships between volunteers and their students to continue beyond the three-year program and into the students' college and post-collegiate experiences. Our volunteers are a motivational powerhouse, always available to provide a listening ear and an encouraging word to the students they mentor.



Without  
you, I  
wouldn't  
have the  
chance to  
be here"

-Jonathan, Minds Matter  
Chicago Alumnus and  
Pomona College class of  
2019

//

## Minds Matter Chicago Alumnus: JOHNATHAN

With the help of Minds Matter Chicago, Johnathan beat the odds in one of the city's most challenged neighborhoods – graduating from high school in Englewood and enrolling Pomona College on a full scholarship.

"I love all of you," Johnathan wrote in an e-mail to the Chicago chapter during his first semester at Pomona College. "Without you, I wouldn't have the chance to be here."

During his three years with Minds Matter, Johnathan attended summer programs at Davidson College and in Peru. With his mentors Megan and Stephen, he navigated the maze of college admissions and financial aid, becoming a Posse Scholar and winning a Gates Millennium Scholarship.

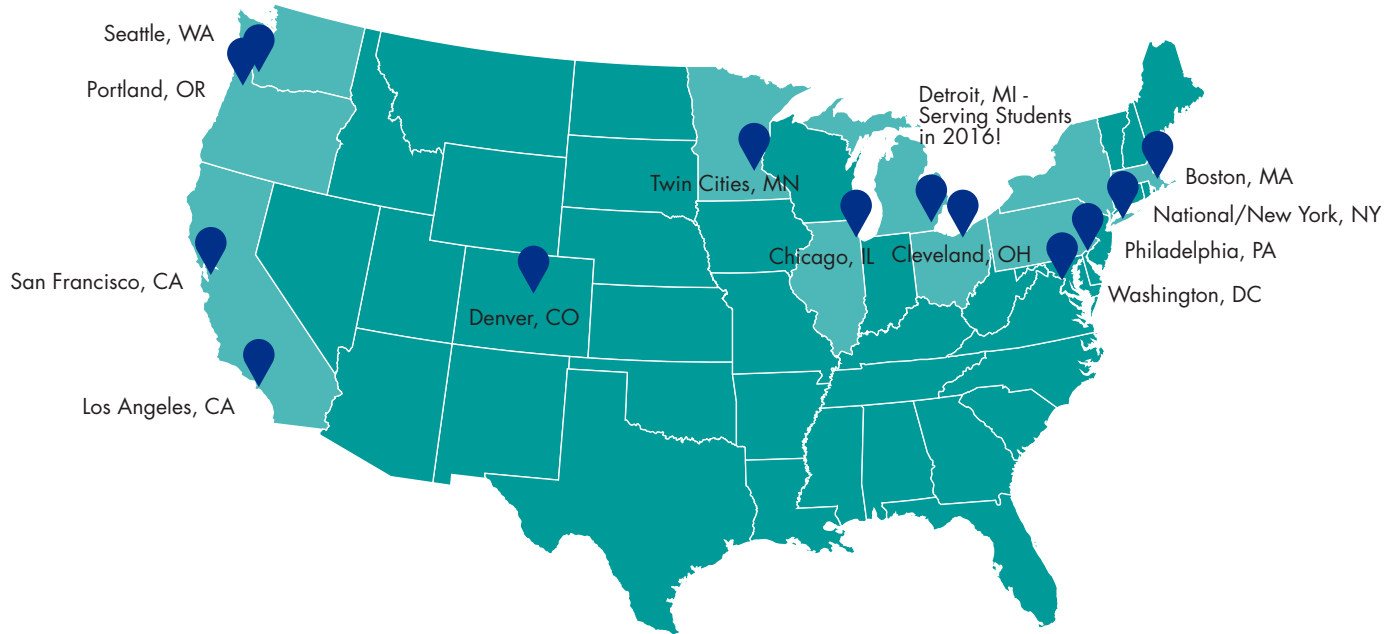
A few months into his freshman year, Johnathan says Pomona is great. He's taking genetics, economics and writing courses. He admires his professors and has made friends from all over – but that's not to say college doesn't have its challenges, too.

"I'm working hard to boost my grades," Johnathan shared. He goes to mentoring and tutoring sessions, plus office hours with his professors – admirably taking advantage of available resources to help him succeed, just as he did with Minds Matter Chicago.



Minds Matter Chicago alumnus Jonathan studies in a Saturday Minds Matter session.

# Minds Matter in Action



100%

of students are admitted to 4-year colleges & universities



73%

of students admitted to Barron's Most, Highly, or Very Competitive schools



611

Students served in the 2014-2015 school year



3.78

Average incoming GPA of Minds Matter students



# Minds Matter by the Numbers



1,700+

volunteers across  
all chapters in FY15



1,257

alumni across the country



89%

of students identify as  
minorities



17:1

Return on Investment



\$24,360

average family income for students



93%

of tracked alumni are enrolled  
in or have graduated from  
4-year colleges and universities



86%

of students are eligible for free or  
reduced lunch



73%

of tracked alumni who enrolled  
in college at least 4 years ago  
have graduated from 4-year  
universities and colleges

## Minds Matter Twin Cities Mentor Story:

# KONG & DREW

*Minds Matter volunteer Drew tells the story of Kong, a bright Minds Matter student determined to attend his dream school. Drew writes:*

//

Kong is one of the first alumni of Minds Matter Twin Cities. Since he began in Minds Matter, Kong wanted to pursue a career in engineering. Kong had his heart set on attending the University of St. Thomas, but he diversified his applications among other public schools in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin at the behest of his mentors. Kong was accepted into almost all the programs to which he applied, and the financial aid packages followed. Kong would be able to attend the University of Minnesota at almost no cost, but St. Thomas was a different story. Though the aid package was generous, there would still be a \$20,000 shortfall. Given the tradeoff, it would seem that Minnesota was the practical choice. Kong was torn. On one hand he had successfully completed his mission of gaining acceptance to a four-year university to study engineering, and could do so at little cost. On the other hand, it wasn't his dream school.

Kong had applied to three scholarships that would make up the difference in cost between St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota, but he wouldn't know if he'd received them until after his decisions to the colleges were due. Kong came up with a game plan: He would ask the universities for an extension so he could make a more informed decision. First he called St. Thomas. I sat on mute as part of a three way call and only Kong knew I was on the phone. I bit my fingernails nervously as Kong let St. Thomas know that they were his first choice and that he'd like an extension. They agreed to grant Kong an extra week. Next came the call to the University of Minnesota, where unfortunately Kong was told he would not get an extension. Kong was defeated, but I told him we would call the scholarship providers the next day to see if they could provide any insight.

I received an unexpected phone call that night from Kong. He spoke very slowly and expressed his thanks for our efforts that day, and that it meant a lot to him that we were trying. He then said that the University of St. Thomas called him earlier and he just got off the phone. The purpose of the call was to tell him that he shouldn't wait on those outside scholarships and that they would like to provide him with a full scholarship package. We both spent the next sixty seconds yelling in excitement.

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Kong is currently part of the University of St. Thomas Class of 2019, studying mechanical engineering.



Kong celebrates his high school graduation with his mentors and Drew.

# College Acceptances

We're consistently impressed by and proud of our Minds Matter students. 100% of our students are accepted into four-year universities and colleges, and many are accepted into some of the most competitive schools in the country.

Below is a list of some of the schools into which graduates of our class of 2015 were accepted:

Allegheny College	Daemen College	Northeastern University
American University	Dartmouth College	Northern Illinois University
Baldwin Wallace University	Denison University	Notre Dame of Maryland University
Barnard College	DePaul University	Nyack College
Bentley University	Dickinson College	Ohio State University
Bowling Green State University	East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	Oregon Institute of Technology
Brandeis University	Fordham University	Pace University
Bryn Mawr College	Franklin and Marshall College	Pacific Lutheran University
Caldwell College	Hamilton College	Pennsylvania State University
California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo	Illinois Institute of Technology	Pomona College
California State University, Long Beach	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Princeton University
California State University, Northridge	Ithaca College	Providence College
California State University, San Francisco	Jackson State University	Purdue University
California State University, San Jose	John Carroll University	Reed College
Carroll College	Kenyon College	Saint Louis University
City College of San Francisco	Lehigh University	Saint Mary's College
Cleveland State University	Lewis & Clark College	Skidmore College
Colorado State University	Long Island University	Smith College
Connecticut College	Loyola University	Southern Illinois University
Cornell University	Loyola University Maryland	St. John's University
CUNY Baruch College	Marquette University	St. Olaf College
CUNY City College	Marymount Manhattan College	St. Thomas University
CUNY Hunter College	Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences	Stonehill College
CUNY New York City College of Technology	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Suffolk University
CUNY Queens College	Middlebury College	SUNY Albany
CUNY Staten Island	Mount Holyoke College	SUNY Brockport
CUNY York College	North Carolina A&T State University	SUNY Buffalo
	Northeastern Illinois University	SUNY Fredonia

SUNY Geneseo  
SUNY New Paltz  
SUNY Potsdam  
Trinity College  
Tufts University  
Union College  
University of California Berkeley  
University of California Irvine  
University of California Los Angeles  
University of California Merced  
University of California Riverside  
University of California San Diego  
University of California Santa Cruz  
University of Colorado - Boulder  
University of Colorado - Denver  
University of Denver  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
University of Illinois at Urbana  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
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University of Miami  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor  
University of Minnesota  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Richmond  
University of St. Thomas  
Villanova University  
Washington State University  
Wellesley College  
Wesleyan University  
West Chester University  
Wheaton College  
Williams College



Four Minds Matter Seattle students—two seniors and two juniors—interned at The Boeing Company in Seattle, WA last summer. Boeing offers high school students who are interested in aerospace manufacturing an opportunity to get hands-on experience and to shadow in their particular area of interest.



430

students attended summer programs in FY15

7



Ivy League Schools hosted Minds Matter students for summer programs

0



dollars spent by students or their families on summer programs

## Summer Program Experience

During the academic year, Minds Matter volunteers mentor students, work with them on standardized test preparation, and provide individualized tutoring in writing and math. In the summer months, students have the opportunity to further that learning and have unforgettable experiences at summer programs across the nation and around the world. Students learn in a college setting, meet other talented and highly motivated high school students, and gain new perspectives on the world around them. We provide students with this invaluable experience by connecting them to the best summer programs, guiding them along the application process, and providing them with the financial aid and support network to make college-immersion summer programs possible.

### Minds Matter Denver Junior: SILVIA

"With the help of the Rocky Mountain Harvard University Club and Minds Matter, I had the amazing opportunity to spend my summer at Harvard. I have wanted to go to Harvard since I was 10 years old, so being there for almost two months was truly a dream come true.



Silvia (center) with her mentors Rachael and Sean

Being there was like being in a different world. I was able to meet new people, live the college experience, and gain a vast array of knowledge. While I was there I took a Law and Psychology class where I had thought provoking conversations with my classmates and professor, and met other people who were passionate about the same topics as me, which made the class even more rewarding.

At the end of the summer, I was ready to come back home to see my family, but I didn't want to leave Harvard. I cannot express how thankful I am to everyone who helped me make this dream come true; if it weren't for them, I wouldn't have had one of the best experiences of my life. I really hope that I have the opportunity to go to Harvard again, this time hopefully as a full-time student."

## Minds Matter Volunteer Spotlight:

# JONATHAN

*Jonathan began as a mentor in the Minds Matter NYC chapter and is currently the Chapter President of Minds Matter Washington, D.C.*

“

Upon moving to Washington DC, I had few friends in the metro area. I was actively looking for new people to meet but also ways to help my community, as I had for five amazing years with Minds Matter in New York City. I was beyond excited when I heard that the DC chapter would be accepting its first class of students. Having been a part of the established NYC chapter, I was excited and nervous to help start a new chapter from scratch. To create a grassroots movement in the DC area, a geographical location ripe with competitive non-profits, was a dream come true.

The DC chapter at Minds Matter operates like a true start-up, where individuals wear many hats, frugality breeds resourcefulness, and the saying “all hands on deck” rings true. It didn’t take long for me to notice the many constants among chapters of Minds Matter: extremely dedicated volunteers, enthusiastic and intellectually curious mentees, and an incredible leadership network in the board of directors.

This year, the DC chapter has six wonderful mentees and 12 mentors who support them. As we approach the first round of summer program deadlines and introduce new geographical opportunities, it is so rewarding to see the smiles on the mentees’ faces. I want to thank Minds Matter of Washington for not only welcoming me with open arms, but also for being my refuge in a new city. Minds Matter has helped me acclimate to my new life in DC, and I hope to do the same for the mentees on their journey to college. I look forward to providing more updates on our mentees’ successes!”

“

It didn’t take long for me to notice the many constants between chapters of Minds Matter: extremely dedicated volunteers, enthusiastic and intellectually curious mentees, and an incredible leadership network in the board of directors.”

-Jonathan, Minds Matter Washington, D.C. president

I grew up believing I had to do everything for myself. Slowly, but surely, I learned how to ask for help... it was a huge lesson to realize that I sometimes can't do it all. If anything, I need community."

-Zhi, Minds Matter San Francisco Alumna and Hamilton College Class of 2019

## Minds Matter San Francisco Alumna: ZHI

“

Zhi remembers one thing about the first time she met her mentors, Sean and Isaac: "They asked so many questions." When she entered the Minds Matter program, Zhi was a shy student. But after seeing her mentors every Saturday, the ice thawed, and the trio started to talk more about her school work, challenges, and passions. Zhi's mentors felt like friends who had gone through the process and could provide some valuable insight and guidance.

"Sean and Isaac are the most optimistic people I've met, and it really helped to be around them because I was pretty anti-social then." Zhi cites their enthusiasm as the element that helped her get into the material and her homework. Zhi's summer program experiences at Andover and Princeton further helped her open up to her mentors because her summer trips were opportunities where she learned how to connect with others and put herself out there.

"I grew up believing I had to do everything for myself. Slowly, but surely, I learned how to ask for help," she said. "There was a lot on my plate. At first, it was difficult to go to my mentors for guidance or assistance when I felt like there was so much to do. It was a huge lesson to realize that I sometimes couldn't do it all by myself. If anything, I need community."

Zhi never really thought about college aside from the fact that she wanted to go.

"Nobody in my family had gone to college, so I had no idea what the process entailed or what I needed to do. I didn't even know what different types of colleges there were outside of state schools," she said. With Sean and Isaac's encouragement and guidance, Zhi explored colleges she would have never even considered. She ultimately applied to 19 schools, including a few out-of-state schools. She was accepted into the majority of the colleges, and her final choices were Middlebury, Kenyon, and Hamilton. Hamilton came out on top because Zhi had such a positive college visit there. Hamilton also offered to cover 100 percent of Zhi's tuition.

When Zhi looks back, she knows that the investment and hard work that she put in as a Minds Matter student changed her life. Every Saturday, Zhi woke up before 7 a.m. to make a long commute from the Bay View district in order to get to Minds Matter. For hours, she tuned in to college prep courses and critical thinking exercises, and connected with her mentors to think deeply around goals, setting a vision of success.

“What would I have been doing otherwise?” Zhi asks herself, “I would’ve probably just been watching TV all those Saturdays. Despite my passion and hard work, I know I wouldn’t be where I am today without Minds Matter.”



Zhi (center) with her mentors Isaac (left) and Sean (right)



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I want everyone at Minds Matter to know that more than helping me academically they helped me as a person. They were there through the tough decisions and all the disappointments. No one gives up on you and that's the best feeling in the world."

- Marissa, Minds Matter  
Cleveland alumna and  
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Being in the Minds Matter program is like having a second family. I've met some of my best friends through the program. My mentors, Vivian, Leala and Rachel, have also been a vital part of my life. They have not only guided me throughout the college application and financial aid process, but they helped me grow as a person as well. Knowing that my mentors believe in me and my ability to succeed definitely gives me more confidence and reassurance. Minds Matter has been a huge support for me throughout high school and even during college."

- Ericka, Minds Matter Los Angeles alumna and UC Berkeley Class of 2019

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