

Daisy Fernandez Found Success in Summit School's Residential Program

This is the story of Daisy Fernandez, a student who has benefited from the extra curriculum, care, and attention of becoming a Residential student.

UPPER NYACK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, June 21, 2022

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Daisy is a 17 year old high school student at the Summit School in Nyack. Growing up, she was always passionate about art - painting, photography, fashion, and more. Following her dreams, Daisy plans to [attend FIT to earn an Associate's degree](#) in photography after she graduates this coming January.



Daisy Fernandez poses with one of her favorite pet goats, Sawyer, on the farm at Summit School.

"I love just the femininity of fashion. It's really nice because like growing up I always loved fashion and photography. So I would take pictures of myself in little outfits and do little videos so I think that caught on."

“

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Kelly Gach

If you were to tell Daisy or even the staff at Nyack just last year that she would be planning to graduate in a year and attend FIT, they would have been ecstatic to say the least. Daisy has adapted and overachieved since her first week at the Summit School in Nyack when she spent every single day alone painting in the school art studio.

"I struggled a lot growing up like getting out there so... my mom pushed me a lot and I didn't want to make her upset

so I just kind of did it... For months I was very shy, very quiet and then everyone just kind of welcomed me and I appreciate that a lot."

Entering the Summit School in Nyack the previous year as a Day student, Daisy switched to the Residential program at 17 years old. Many of the social situations she found herself immersed

into were previously foreign to her - she had never had a roommate before. But like her roommate, whom she clicked with immediately, Daisy found the strength to adjust. Her homeroom teacher and a social studies teacher at Summit Nyack, Bill Leone, noticed a change in Daisy once she entered the residential school.

For Bill, creating a personal relationship about things students like to do “as a person” outside of career and school helps open them to mentoring. And with Daisy, he found it was easy as she went from being shy or unsure about her future to confidently expressing her goals in the arts. An aspect of the residential school that Bill finds particularly important is in providing students with field trips which help them grow socially and emotionally.

“We have a [broad spectrum of students](#) come here. Some from very advantageous backgrounds and some from very low socioeconomic backgrounds. For many of them, they’ve never been brought to a place. So we do a lot of things off campus. You know, a lot of them had never been to restaurants before so we go out to eat... It’s like a mini family vacation.”

And it’s a close relationship with staff at Nyack that has helped Daisy in maturing and growing as an individual.

“At my old school teachers wouldn’t really talk to you that much. They would just be like, ‘Hi’, ‘Bye’, you’re here for education that’s it. But I think here they treat you like their own... I never thought I would have a friendship with teachers so it’s really nice that I get to have that.”

When asked directly how the Summit School prepared her for graduation, Daisy reflects,

“A lot of therapy... There was a time where I just wasn’t ready to leave and sometimes I still feel like that where I’m just not ready to leave, but I think now I just need to start my life and move forward. I never thought that I would even graduate, I never thought that I would even live past this time so it’s crazy to me.”

Daisy says her social worker, Kelly Gach, understood what she was going through emotionally and was able to work with her to get her to a healthier point.

“When I first came here I was kind of embarrassed because mental health is so taboo and coming here is so taboo.”

Kelly worked from the beginning of Daisy’s time at Nyack to encourage her to [open up to new people and opportunities](#).

“I have found that when students like Daisy accept help, form meaningful relationships, and become involved in the community, it makes a world of difference... We also model appropriate behaviors in everyday life and help students learn to take care of their own wellbeing. No matter how prepared you are, if you don’t take care of yourself, you can only do so much. You can’t pour

from an empty cup.”

With all the work that Daisy has put in at Nyack, her story has become the epitome of success for students who transition from the Day to the Residential program, and the staff at Nyack have gained new insights from working with Daisy through the process. One such staff member is the school physical education teacher Jon Neiderman, who spoke to Daisy’s relationship with Summit,

“Outside of here, [Daisy] was a little quiet, but here she thrives because of the smaller class size, because of the friendships that she makes with the students as well as the staff...when she made the transition, I think she really thrived in becoming a resident because she was able to really form those solid relationships with the Cottage staff as well as her bunk mates and some of the other teachers...”

Jon first met Daisy in his Photography and Photoshop class where he worked with Daisy as she developed her skills beginning by emulating her favorite icons like Ariana Grande. Right now, he is working with Daisy on the school yearbook and is more than pleased with her approach to the work and sees a great future for her at FIT and beyond. By targeting her interests with activities like the school yearbook, Jon says he found in large part that Daisy could succeed just by being provided opportunities to grow toward and fulfill her goals.

“I think that she came in as a teenager and she’s leaving a woman. She really has matured both on the emotional side of things as well as on the social side of things.”

Jon Neiderman
Summit School at Nyack

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