

# The Challenge Foundation

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Greeting Friends of The Challenge Foundation!

Fall is my favorite time of year. The colorful leaves, harvest festivals, and the arrival of “sweater weather” remind me of my time growing up in New England, and the feeling of making sure that I savored each remaining warm day before the long winter set in.

As many of you know, I began working with the Challenge Foundation this summer, and over the past four months, my time here has renewed in me the sense that I make the most of each day. And while I consider myself to be a “doer”, I can’t take credit for being the source of the sense of urgency that I feel each day – that thanks goes to the Challenge Foundation scholars. Their drive, attitude, ability to be their authentic selves, and generosity of spirit both inspire and humble me every day.

As I am new to Challenge, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit more about my background. I am a product of independent schools, hav-

ing grown up in boarding schools where my parents taught. While I started my educational career in the public school sector, my parents, concerned about the budget cuts in the school district and the growing size of my classroom at that time, had the foresight to move me in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade to a smaller, more nurturing, independent day school. While my parents had the connections and resources necessary to finding a better learning environment for me, being teachers, they lacked the financial resources. I was fortunate enough, however, to receive financial assistance, and this aid continued all the way through my college years. I feel an enormous sense of gratitude to the schools that invested in me and helped my family finance my education along the way.

My entire work history has been devoted to working in the educational field. I have worked in educational consulting, teacher placement, and most recently, in admission to independent schools. During my work in admission, the families and students who had the greatest impact on me were those for whom I could

make the biggest difference in their lives. Now, working for the Challenge Foundation, I am incredibly fortunate to be working with an organization and people who are making differences everyday, investing in children’s futures, and doing it right.

Recently, I found myself perched on a family’s couch in their living room during one of our home visits for our scholar finalists. As I looked into the child’s face, I was met with eyes full of expectancy and hope, and all at once felt the weight of the choices we have yet to make in selecting our final group and the sense of incredible opportunity that we are able to create for these students. There is no doubt that we are doing important work, and the sense of urgency is great.

Thank you for all of your continued support of the Challenge Foundation. You are changing lives.

My best,

Kelly Holley  
Executive Director



Former Executive Director, Kristin Wells,  
with new Executive Director, Kelly Holley.

## The Spirit of Giving



Dr. Kessler with Challenge Foundation students, Rachel, Jazmine, and Dahlia, at their orthodontic appointment.

*"She couldn't help but crack a big smile and show her braces off."*

This fall, some of our scholars are lucky enough to be getting braces from a generous donation from Town Center Dentistry and Ortho-

dontics in Stapleton. One of the principles in the Town Center Dentistry mission statement is to do community service as an office. According to Linda Rundles, who has worked with Dr. Kessler, "The Challenge Foundation's students came into our lives in perfect timing, as we were seeking some patients for whom to donate orthodontic services. The students are excited to get their teeth straightened and very appreciative and engaging. We are proud to provide a small but important piece in their lives – a beautiful smile!"

Dr. Kessler and her team

screened nine scholars to determine who was in need of braces. Of the nine scholars, seven were selected to move forward and receive braces by the end of the year, while the other two still need to lose the last of their baby teeth. By the end of September, three scholars had received braces (see photo).

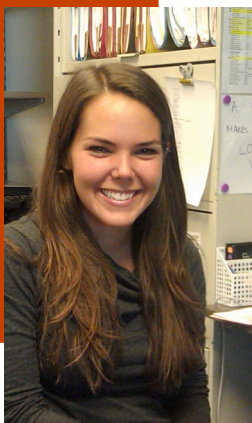
Rachel, a sixth grade student at St. Mary's Academy, was both excited and nervous to get her braces. She knew she wanted straight teeth and a better smile, but had heard that getting braces hurts. Her anxiety overwhelmed her the whole ride to the orthodontist office. Once she got there, and Dr. Kessler began to adhere the brackets, she thought, "This isn't so bad! I wish I had never even been nervous!" Rachel explained later that Dr. Kessler was so gentle and took great care of her teeth. She is excited for her next appointment so she can pick new colors for her rubber bands.

"Right now I have yellow, green, and blue bands! Next time I think I will get black and white!" Rachel shared excitedly. Rachel is still getting used to having braces, and she said that sometimes it is hard not to be able to eat some of her favorite foods and candy, like tacos and lollipops. This past week, Rachel had picture day at school. At first, she tried not to smile, but then in the last second she couldn't help but crack a big smile and show her braces off.

The Challenge Foundation community, especially its scholars that are also now Dr. Kessler's patients, are extremely grateful for the generous donation of orthodontist services provided by Dr. Kessler and the staff at the Town Center Orthodontics. Town Center Orthodontics is located in Stapleton at 7479 East 29<sup>th</sup> Place, Denver, CO.

Written by Danica Hemmann

Challenge Foundation's newest employee, Kelsey Traynor.



## Welcome Aboard!

Please help us in welcoming Kelsey Traynor to the Challenge Foundation staff. Kelsey is no stranger to Challenge Foundation, as she has taught in our

summer program for the past three years, and knows our students and staff well. Kelsey is a graduate of St. Mary's Academy and went on to study at St. Louis University where she graduated Cum Laude with a

degree in Education and Minors in Theology and Mathematics. Kelsey will be serving as a case manager for several of our students, as well as directing the Mentoring Program. We are excited to welcome Kelsey!

## Challenge Student Gives Back

Rhianna Antonopoulos is a Challenge Foundation scholar who is currently a senior at St. Mary's Academy. Since beginning high school, Rhianna has participated in a number of service activities including service trips to Costa Rica, Mexico and New Orleans. Her most consistent service project has been volunteering at the Children's Hospital every weekend for 4-6 hours for the past 4 years.

Her responsibility as a "float" at the hospital includes traveling from floor to floor offering assistance to patients or nurses that want or need her help. Rhianna was motivated to volunteer at Children's because she has been a patient there since she was young and had seen the many volunteers who made such a great impact. She chooses to continue her service at Children's because she loves putting a smile on the kid's faces. She comments, "Even if I feel like I'm doing something really small; it makes a big im-

pact on them." Rhianna enjoys forming a relationship with the patients, remarking that it makes her happy knowing that she is helping others. Rhianna has also learned that she is very patient and empathetic to the needs of the kids with whom she works.

When asked why service is important to her, Rhianna replied, "It is everyone's responsibility to give a little bit of time for a greater good. If you want to make a large impact, you have to start by making small changes in other people's lives." Her most memorable moment at Children's Hospital was working with a girl who was in her late teens suffering from a brain injury. This girl was in the hospital for over six months and would request that Rhianna come and read a book to her each time that she was volunteering at the hospital. Rhianna was able to see the impact that she was making in this girl's life by doing something that seemed



so simple.

Rhianna plans to continue her service at Children's Hospital until she leaves for college next fall. She is in the process of applying to a number of schools on both the east and west coasts and is hoping to attend a women's college. Her career goal is to publish a fiction novel. We are proud of Rhianna for her achievements in school and her dedication to serving the community, and we wish her the best of luck in college and her future endeavors!

Written by Holly Dichter

## Recruitment of Challenge Scholars

The Challenge Foundation recently completed home visits for fifth grade students applying to enter the program next year. Home visits give us an insight into the lives of our students at home and allow us to spend some time getting to know their parents. It is always inspiring to see how much this opportunity means to students and families who are applying. This year, we interviewed 15 students for 8-10 scholarships that will be

offered for the 2012-2013 school year. We have some very difficult decisions to make regarding who will be asked to continue on to the next step. Next steps include, applications to schools and a second round of home visits. Scholarship recipients will be notified at the beginning of March.

In addition to working with 5th grade applicants, we have also begun testing 4th grade students who may be asked to apply

for the scholarship during their 4th grade year. This year, we plan to test over 200 students for 8-10 scholarships that will be offered for the 2013-2014 school year.

October, November and December are busy recruitment months around the Challenge Foundation office. It is always exciting to meet potential scholars.

Written by Holly Dichter



## THE CHALLENGE FOUNDATION

**MISSION STATEMENT:**  
**Beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Challenge Foundation provides rigorous academics, enrichment and support to high potential, disadvantaged students to empower them to graduate from college and make a positive impact on their communities.**



Challenge Foundation 9th grade boys on their summer program rafting trip.

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## The College Experience

Challenge Foundation scholar, Carla Cardoza graduated with the class of 2011 from St. Mary's Academy and is currently a freshman at Colorado State University where she is majoring in Biology. Carla has been with the Challenge Foundation since the 6<sup>th</sup> grade when she entered our program from Columbine Elementary School.

Carla has embraced college life and her academics. While the initial adjustment was hard, as it is for most students, Carla now says her dorm feels like home and she has made lots of friends on campus. Her favorite things about being a college student at CSU are having the ability to take courses that interest her and the constant exposure to meeting new people with diverse backgrounds and opinions from her

own. Carla is certainly living college life to the fullest and making the most of her educational career.

"If it hadn't been for Challenge Foundation giving me the wonderful opportunity to attend St. Mary's Academy, I don't know where I would be right now." Carla feels that SMA prepared her well for the academic rigor of college and even claims that her college studies are "easier than high school." She often hears of other students stressing over their workloads and the time required to complete homework; however, Carla feels that her studies are more than manageable due to her educational experiences at SMA.

Its rewarding for the Challenge Foundation to see our students so happy and successful at college, and we wish Carla all the best as she embarks on this wonderful journey.

Written by Kate Van Cott

