

# Facing the Challenge

A NEWSLETTER BY **maaps** TO INFORM YOU AND TO CELEBRATE OUR STUDENTS

## Jeff

Jeff came to New England Academy (NEA) after a journey of sorts. You see, Jeff didn't grow up in a traditional family setting; rather, his was more sporadic and unsettling. Many of Jeff's life experiences have been largely forced upon him, causing a great deal of undue



*Jeff poses in front of NEA school logo.*

stress at a young age. Whether it was the time spent living in a shelter with his mother or the difficulties that arose from a transition to live with his grandmother, who is now his legal guardian, Jeff has been faced with many obstacles and challenges.

With Jeff's familial strife came social and emotional problems that complicated his development and academic advancement. As a child, Jeff used

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to act out behaviorally at school and at home. This behavior would only serve to further the disconnect that he was already experiencing with his school and family. In addition, while at school, his academics were not the priority, as his social/emotional needs were too overwhelming. Over time, as Jeff grew older, his behaviors improved but the remnants of his earlier struggles remained a hindrance to his academic and social well-being. To Jeff's credit, rather than letting these circum-

stances consume him, he chose a path for himself that was very different from the one his environment was constructing for him.

Jeff has made a decision to not let life's situations dictate his future; instead, he is choosing to make one for himself. Although the road has been arduous for Jeff, he has been unrelenting in his pursuit of seeing through to the other side of his personal issues. He is a prime example of what hard work, perseverance, trust, and positive choices can achieve. With all of his efforts and progress, Jeff realized that there had to be more, something that could help him achieve that ever elusive “next level” as he puts it. He said he found this in New England Academy and that it's “the bees-knees when it comes to small, private schools for those children and teenagers who need extra support.” Jeff goes on to say that, “just like the academics, the therapeutic support services at NEA are top-notch, especially when receiving 1-on-1 attention.”

When Jeff came to NEA, his emotions, perceptions of social situations, and therapeutic needs continued to hamper his academic progress; however, he was more ready than ever to tackle not only these issues but those of a rigorous, highly structured academic environment. With the balance of academics and therapeutic supports in tow, Jeff was eager to make his dream of

### *About Facing the Challenge*

Facing the Challenge is published by the Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools (**maaps**) which represents 95 member corporations operating 180 private day and residential schools approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education to provide highly specialized education and treatment services to over 6,000 of the state's most disabled and disadvantaged students. For more information, contact **maaps** at 781-245-1220.

attending a 4-year college a reality. As Jeff worked through his personal issues and his confidence rose, he transformed himself into a top student.

Jeff is not without error though, and this is something that he readily admits. The foundation that he has built for himself at NEA has turned what used to be a major social/emotional episode or misunderstanding, into a mere blip. This progress is Jeff's to be owned but he is also quick to acknowledge the school for its support and guidance. "Whenever I need someone to talk to or bounce ideas off of, my individual counselor is just a minute or two away." It's moments like this that have allowed Jeff to not only make progress with himself but to stay focused on his academics, which has helped him to achieve a 3.6 GPA and National Honor Society status.

As Jeff ponders where his next step will lead him, he has many options to consider. Looking at his transformation, Jeff states that "the growth I've experienced while attending NEA is unquantifiable and will forever have changed my life. I can proudly say that I'm glad to be a student in the class of 2008." Jeff's story is an inspiration to all, especially those in similar situations. His dramatic evolution is why NEA exists, to provide the necessary academic and therapeutic supports for students to be successful and advance to the next level - in academics and in life. With Jeff's graduation in sight, he can rest easy knowing that he has already been accepted to and offered a scholarship to his top college of choice, Merrimack College.

## Improve Child Safety Through Enhanced CORI Checks

C.766 approved private special education residential schools must obtain a group care license from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). EEC regulates publicly or privately funded programs that provide services to children, including residential C.766 programs. EEC regulations require licensed residential schools to obtain CORI checks on all job candidates for staff positions that have unsupervised contact with children in a C.766 program. C.766 approved residential schools must submit CORI check requests to ECC for processing.

It is in the public's interest to protect all children in the Commonwealth. Requiring C.766 residential schools to obtain a CORI check on job candidates protects children from adults with criminal records. However, the CORI checks in Massachusetts only list criminal

records within the state. Many C.766 schools have staff that have lived out-of-state, especially schools that are in border communities of surrounding states.

S.945 would require CORI checks on a national basis. Section 8 of Governor Patrick's Executive Order #495 mentions a feasibility study "of providing access to the 50-state conviction data contained in the Interstate Identification Index ("III") to entities certified to receive CORI under G.L. c. 6 § 172(b)." Action needs to be taken by the legislature to protect our Commonwealth's most fragile children with disabilities. By passing S.945, students with disabilities will be protected from adults with criminal records both within and outside of Massachusetts.

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