



# B.A.G. presents the “Graceful Warrior Award”

Awarded to youth for overcoming obstacles and showing  
courage, resilience, perseverance, and dedication to their goals



# Diaraye Sow

Hi, my name is Diaraye and I am currently going to UAlbany. My major is human development with a concentration in Special and Elementary Education and Literacy in hopes of joining the master's program to become a teacher. I honestly don't think I would be here if it wasn't for Ms. Stacey. As a first-generation student, I had to learn everything about college and its application process on my own and it was so overwhelming. Ms. Stacey helped removed that burden off my shoulders; meeting with me once a week to go over different applications and scholarships. With her help I got a nomination to POSSE and actually got in , she walked me through the process and eased all of my anxiety and worries about not getting in.

She provided me with academic and emotional support, and now I can't wait to tell her any good news that comes into my life. Because of Ms. Stacey's encouragement I am a year ahead of my peers, I have a 3.5 GPA , made the Dean's list and am on track to apply for the graduate program beginning of Spring of 2026. Thank you, Ms. Stacey for being a shoulder to lean on, when I had no one in my corner. Thank you Diaraye for your efforts with our guidance.



# Isaiah McEaddy

Isaiah McEaddy's journey at The Door-BYC is a true example of dedication and hard work. When he first arrived, he stayed focused and motivated, ultimately earning his GED diploma. Now, Isaiah is taking the next step by joining The Door's Train and Earn Carpentry program, where he will continue developing valuable skills to achieve his goals. His accomplishments inspire others, showing that with perseverance and the right support, success is possible. We're proud of Isaiah and excited to see him grow even further!



# Adama Barry

Adama has emerged as a pillar of the community by providing translation for our new New Yorkers by sharing resources across the organization. He makes himself available for all our events and does it with a smile. He currently sits on our youth council to expand further the services that he contributes to The Door. A talented poet, multi-lingual person who exemplifies black excellence.



# Lijasad (Lij) Maxwell

The AHC is proud to nominate Lijasad for the Graceful Warrior Award. Since joining our team in January 2023, Lij has been a standout Senior Peer Educator, known for his creativity, leadership, and dedication. He excels at mentoring peers, taking initiative, and creating a welcoming space for new Door members. Lij's humor and thoughtful guidance help young people feel seen and supported.

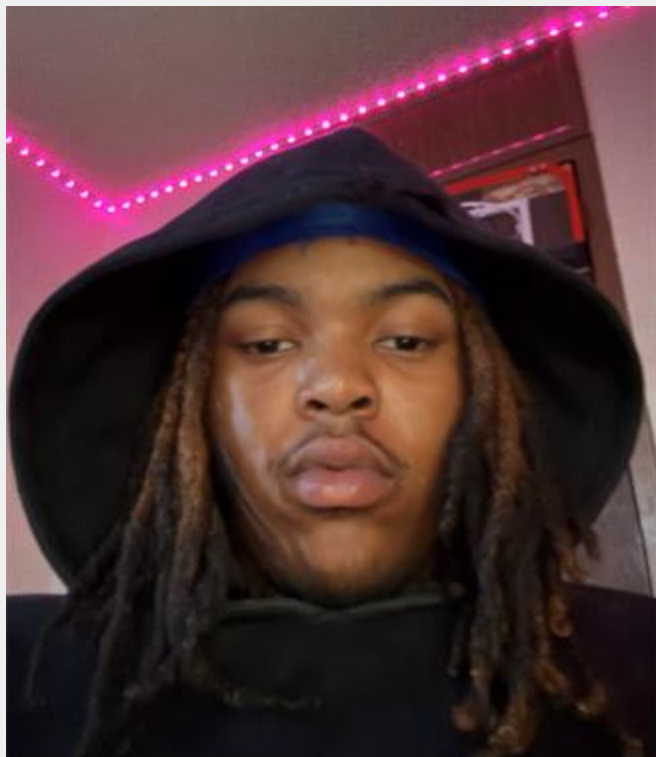
He pushes his peers in the program and around The Door to reach their full potential while leading with integrity and kindness. His strong work ethic and genuine care for others make him an inspiring role model. Outside of the Peer Program, Lij is pursuing a degree in Information Systems. He is passionate about social justice issues, including the rights of the incarcerated, environmental concerns, and housing inequality.

In his own words from his application, "I've always enjoyed helping others and offering advice from my experiences. People often tell me I'm wise beyond my years." Lij's impact speaks for itself, and we are excited to honor him as a Graceful Warrior.



# Luyerka (Lulu) Cepeda

Luyerka Cepeda affectionally known as Lulu), entered the Advance and Earn program ready to get to work from the very start in doing those things needed to be successful in obtaining her goals and fulfilling her aspirations. Lulu was fully engaged in class from the very beginning and quickly became a valuable and beloved staff member at her internship site. She passed the necessary sections of the GED Exam to obtain her High School Equivalency diploma and is currently working with Future Pathways with the intention of enrolling in college in the Fall.



# Tyreek Baudoin

Tyreek Baudoin is a young man who came to Advance and Earn in September 2024. He came to us a referral from Broome Street Academy. Unfortunately, he was not able to find success at BSA but was able to find success with us. He was very excited to get to work to start a new chapter and earn his GED. He was very successful in class which was taught by our partners at Pathways to Graduation and at his internship site. He graduated in December 2024 with his High School Equivalency Diploma. His hard work and diligence paid off.



# Thom Joseph

I'd like to nominate Thom, prior to him being a current member of the youth council this cohort he has been a breath of fresh air. Super helpful around the space also a genuine sweet YP.

Thom is so deserving of this honor.



# Ladu Kilang

From Aster Kidane: In the first week I met Ladu, I advised him to register for GED course and obtain a library card. 3 days later he came with a library card and GED test preparation application. He had also 3 GED tests scheduled. He passed all his GED exams. I advised him to meet with a career council. The following day I went in person to touch base with the counselor. He beat me to it. He has already met with the counselor soon after I informed him. The counselor advised him that due to NYS regulations he cannot yet register for a college. He is now taking various free pre-college courses online. He is making his future by working hard - he studied hard for his exams. He is now furiously preparing for college course. He is humble, reliable and pleasant company.



# Amen Jones

Amen is a graduate of The CUT Culinary Experiences' August cohort. His quiet nature and cautious approach to group interactions were evident early on, which made his progression all the more impressive. However, his ability to take constructive feedback and use it to push forward was a key factor in his development.

What stood out most during his time in the kitchen was Amen's ability to connect with Chef Stacey and the team. Amen completed our program with full-time employment at Cava, where he continues to refine his skills and build on the foundation he laid during his time with us. His journey reflects the transformation of someone who embraced feedback, worked diligently, and emerged stronger as both a chef and a team member.





# Aqueem Lion



Aqueem Lyon has been an inspiring presence in the CDL program since he started in September 2024. Throughout the cohort, he has consistently demonstrated his potential, never shying away from challenges and always embracing new opportunities for growth. His dedication and hard work paid off as he successfully earned his CDL license.

Now, as he embarks on a new job, Aqueem's journey serves as a testament to perseverance and determination. His positive attitude and commitment have made a lasting impact on those around him, setting a great example for future CDL candidates.





**We see you, and we honor  
your grace & strength.**



The Door's Black Affinity Group

