

# Learning How to See Your Big Ideas Come to Life

*How Teagan Murphy is Impacting Her Community One Child at a Time*



Our vision at the Eda and Cliff Viner Community Scholars Foundation is to “*successfully lead accomplished graduates into the world, who contribute to their families and communities.*” It is so important to us that to be considered for a Viner Scholarship a student must complete over 100 hours of community service in high school, which is double the graduation requirement.

We believe that each of our scholars share our passion to give back and are so proud to highlight the ways that they are making differences.

Viner Scholar, Teagan Murphy, is a student at University of Florida. She is an active member in her local Children Beyond Our Borders chapter and her ability to impact the community around her has gone further than the campus. She is now impacting the county at large.

Keep reading to learn more about what Teagan is accomplishing!

- **How has your experience at UF been so far?**

*My experience at UF has been incredible. I have found two areas of study that I absolutely love: Family, Youth & Community Sciences and Sociology. These majors have helped me realize my goals to pursue a career in nonprofit management and to continue conducting research on social issues. I have also had the opportunity to engage in several of my passions outside of the classroom. I am currently the Mentorship Director on the management team of Children Beyond Our Borders, Inc. I serve as the President of Student Animal Alliance and a scholarship committee member of the CALS Student Philanthropy Council. I was recently selected to serve as an Assistant Director for Gatorship, a social justice and diversity retreat offered through the University of Florida. I am also a choreographer for Dancin’ Gators, an all-level, multi-style dance team. I have found several amazing opportunities and connected with so many wonderful people throughout my time at UF.*

- **Describe Children Beyond Our Borders, Inc.**

Children Beyond Our Borders, Inc. (CBOB) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide opportunities for children and youth affected by armed conflict and social injustice to find peace, prosperity and well-being through education and empowerment. CBOB provides educational workshops and scholarships to students in Colombia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, and it provides tutoring and workshops to students in Gainesville and Orlando. I learned about CBOB the summer before my first semester at UF, and I applied for an internship because I strongly supported the mission of serving underprivileged youth.

- **What made you start a College Prep Mentoring Program?**

As a former low-income high school student, I understand what it's like to feel behind and lost in the college application process. Along with worrying about the price of college, I was concerned with how I would afford the costs and fees associated with applying to college and taking standardized tests. I also had to figure out how I would manage applying to college, preparing for tests, filling out financial aid forms, and searching for scholarships, all within the same short period of time. Having someone personally guide me throughout the process would have helped me avoid a lot of stress and mistakes along the way. While working with CBOB, I saw an opportunity to expand our impact using my own experiences and those of my low-income peers. I wanted to create a mentoring program that would provide students with answers to all of the questions they have and the ones they wouldn't have thought to ask during the college application process. Low-income students frequently miss out on opportunities created for them simply because they do not have the information and guidance. Through this program, we hope to provide a tangible service that fills in the information gap between our students and college success.

- **How do you feel about getting your program sponsored by the Alachua County Public School System?**

After having my first meeting with the Superintendent of Alachua County Public Schools and hearing that she loved the program, I was overwhelmingly happy. The program had become so much more real and was guaranteed to be implemented and make an impact. I feel much more confident in the program and every step I take now feels much more legitimate.

- **How are you finding mentors for your students?**

In order to recruit mentors, I reached out to different university departments, student organizations, and faculty members to ask them to send out announcements to the students on their email lists. We also promoted applications on CBOB's social media accounts. The minimum mentoring qualifications are that you are able to commit 30 minutes per week to mentoring and training for one full academic year. We also consider the general availability of the applicant, their past experiences, and their enthusiasm for the program and its goals.

- **Now that you have approval and funding, what are the next steps?**

Our next steps are to select schools to launch our pilot program and go through the schools to target students who would benefit from the program. Then we would match interested students with mentors from among our current applicants.

- **How has Viner Scholars Foundation helped you?**

This scholarship has allowed me to attend college completely debt-free. I get to use my time by committing to my studies and engaging in extracurricular activities and internships rather than worrying about working to make ends meet. As a student with a low-income background, I recognize how fortunate I am to be in this situation. I have also received professional guidance and even friendship through my mentor, Nancy, who gives me advice and a fresh perspective no one else can. I am so incredibly grateful and owe this experience to the Viner Scholars Foundation.

- **What is the most important thing you've learned or gained from this experience with Children Beyond Our Borders?**

Through CBOB, I've learned how to follow through with big ideas. Throughout my life I've had ideas for different projects and programs and events, but I've always found it difficult not only to start but to follow an idea through to the end. CBOB gave me experience with organizing events and projects from start to finish. This eventually gave me the confidence to start the College Prep Mentoring Program, and follow through with each step, from developing the entire curriculum for the two-year program to reaching out to the Alachua school board to promoting mentor applications.

- **What are a few of your personal goals?**

When I finish my undergraduate studies, I hope to continue pursuing higher education by obtaining a master's degree in nonprofit management and potentially a Ph.D. I hope to spend time working for different nonprofit organizations and eventually move on to nonprofit consulting and research, helping nonprofit organizations improve their structure and impact. This experience with CBOB and at UF in general has made me want to focus on nonprofit organizations that center on education inequality. I would also love to lead research on the issue and develop more solutions for overcoming education inequality in our communities.