

## BHAS Student Commends Andrews

Participation in the Early College Experience and community engagement programs contributed to success

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Tamia Clay participates in an Andrews University community engagement program. (Photo by Carlisle Sutton, director, Community Engagement Integration & Service)

By: Carlisle Sutton, director, Community Engagement Integration & Service

Tamia Clay is an 18-year-old senior at Benton Harbor High School. She grew up in a large family in Benton Harbor, Michigan. This city is known for its high crime rates, socioeconomic challenges, and low educational outcomes. Tamia says she was always an intelligent child and her family had expectations that she would succeed academically. She started Kindergarten at age 5 in the Benton Harbor Area Schools (BHAS) and, apart from Grades 6–8 spent in Iowa, is a proud product of the school district.

In 2017, Andrews University signed a partnership agreement with the BHAS. As part of this agreement the University offered scholarships to BHAS high school students to participate in an Andrews University program that allowed above-average students the opportunity to gain university credits in a summer intensive on the Andrews campus. Tamia first came to learn about the Early College Experience through her high school counselor and was immediately attracted to the program because of the college credits and the food.

That summer she enrolled in Communication Skills, where students were introduced to the dynamics of effective communication. Each student was required to prepare and present three different types of speeches. Students needed to research topics and cite their sources, then create engaging presentations with a logical flow of ideas that kept the attention of their peers. Of this experience Tamia says, “The other participants were very supportive and accepting. It was a nice, warm environment. I built confidence in public speaking and had so much fun with them. They were really welcoming.”

Aaron Moushon, Early College Experience director, says, “It was a joy to have an opportunity to work with Tamia during the summer Early College Experience. She was one of only two high school sophomores to participate that summer and she showed great maturity and resolve throughout the program. Tamia was an active participant both in and out of the classroom and took full advantage of this unique college experience for high school students. We are proud to have had her spend a summer with us at Andrews University.”

Tamia gained her first university credits in that program. The experience profoundly impacted her life’s trajectory and she now intends to pursue a degree in communication. She also wants to be able to travel and hopes to earn this degree outside of the United States.

However, this was not to be Tamia’s only link to Andrews University. In 2017 and 2018, she participated in the Andrews University Career Fairs for high school juniors and seniors. In 2018, the Andrews University Department of Nursing started a high school nursing mentoring program. Again, Tamia’s high school counselor told her about the program, but this time she went further and put her name on the list. Tamia went to the first session and kept going because she found it was interesting. Tamia says, “I didn’t want to take the class because I am afraid of blood, but I enjoyed it. I learned how to handle difficult situations such as an emergency.”

Over the two semesters, Andrews University’s nursing students under the supervision of faculty Shawna Henry and Khonnah Weithers, and department chair Jochebed Ade-Oshifogun, taught the high school seniors and juniors Hands Only CPR, medical terminology, first aid, and gave presentations on other health-related topics. Tamia believes that the fact they were able to work with nursing students around their age helped make the program more relatable.

In 2019, Tamia Clay won the Michigan Works Student Leader of the Year Award. The winner was selected based on the evaluation of essays submitted to the organization on how students said they were making a difference in their communities. Tamia is confident that her efforts to build her community as well as her great communication skills helped her win the award. Tamia is now the vice-president of the Jobs of Michigan Graduates at Benton Harbor High School.

Of the award Tamia says, “The Award means a lot. I live in a community that is really struggling. Students here often feel that they will never amount to anything. The Student Leader of the Year Award is turning the labels they have been given and helping others see that they can achieve. The Award is not only important to me but to my friends, the students of the district, the schools, and the wider community.”

Tamia has been accepted into a number of universities. However, she is exploring options that best meet with her financial resources. “I dream to be a high-level public speaker, a community developer because I want to expand and grow the Benton Harbor community. And make it a better place.”

Of her experience with the Andrews University programs Tamia says, “These programs taught me how to build resilience and how to achieve—even when things don’t go my way. The programs really got me out of my comfort zone and inspired me to pursue my dreams. They taught me I could conquer anything as long I put my best foot forward.”

When asked what she would tell other students about these Andrews University programs she said,

“I would tell kids to definitely get into these programs. Even if they are not planning on going into nursing or going to a Christian campus, they can definitely get involved because I was like that. I did not like blood. I pushed myself and these programs helped me to find my career. I have learned I love talking and interacting...”

Andrews University nursing students said of the mentoring program,

“The community partnership program impacted me positively. It was a great experience and an excellent learning opportunity for me. That we can better equip these students with skills that will help them make a difference in their community is the biggest impact for me.” *Timmy Adesina*

“We are building interconnecting relationships. Reaching out to the community made me feel like a disciple. Helping the kids learn a certain skill set that they could implement in their setting or situation and in turn teach others around them was a fulfilling experience. It helped me seize the opportunity given to me through AUSNA to reach out to them using skills that I already had. This was such a wonderful program for us to be a part of and I pray it continues.” *Stuti Dass*

World Changers Made Here is not an empty slogan! These four words articulate the University’s vision to be a campus that transforms students and others to do their best as they strive to positively impact the world around them. The outcome of such intentionality can only produce individuals whose lives change communities and transform lives. The University continues to develop other programs to support the students of the BHAS.

We are all proud of the achievements of Tamia Clay and continue to wish her every success as she seeks to achieve her life’s calling. She too has caught the vision and is on track to becoming a World Changer!