Alumni Spotlight

Jide Iruka ’98

As Jide Iruka ’98 navigates her career path, a major guiding light has been her mentor, Mike Hard. Happily employed as marketing brand manager at JG Black Book of Travel in New York City, Jide initially doubted that she could benefit from a mentor. But when she learned of the opportunity to connect with Mike through Steppingstone, she decided to give it a shot.

The first step was a preliminary meeting to determine whether Jide and Mike would be a good fit for this type of relationship. Alison Levy, Assistant Director of Stewardship, provided Jide with Mike’s contact information, and Jide emailed Mike to set up their first meeting in his office.

When Jide arrived, Mike gave her a quick tour and then the pair settled in for their meeting. Jide recalled being intimidated at first, “I think intimidation is natural when you know you’re about to meet someone who has tons of experience and connections, and manages their own business. I knew I would need to be open and honest, and expected the same from Mike.”

The conversation soon began to flow naturally. Mike asked Jide questions like, “Where do you see yourself in five years? What is your dream job? What are the steps you will take to get there? Do you know your worth?” Even at this early stage, Jide was able to open up to Mike and share her professional experiences and questions, finding that the more comfortable she became, the more valuable the experience. Jide realized that mentors can be a huge benefit no matter where you are in your career, because they help you think about your long-term goals and the best steps to take to achieve them.

After their initial meeting, Jide and Mike have continued to stay in touch through emails and phone calls. Jide says, “Mike has been a major influence in my life and has helped me answer tough questions about my future.” Now, when Jide is pondering anything from her long-term career plan to everyday interactions with colleagues, she knows Mike is only a phone call away.

Thanks to Mike’s guidance, Jide is able to take advantage of her own network and resources. “Mike hasn’t helped me by offering his network, but instead by helping me to realize the potential of my own, and how to make the most of it.” Jide now makes a point to stay in touch with former managers who are well connected and already invested in her growth. This experience has also illuminated the value of the Steppingstone network. Jide says, “Without Steppingstone, a lot of the branches of my life wouldn’t exist.”

Jide recommends that all Scholars and Alumni take advantage of this great opportunity. She says, “This process has shed a lot of light on the path we take to maneuver our way through the working world. I think it’s really important to find someone who has your back. We all need a little encouragement.”

Need a Mentor?

Please reach out to Alison Levy (aley@tsf.org) if you are interested in being paired with a professional mentor, or if you would like to volunteer to mentor a Scholar in college or an Alumnus/a starting their career.
Health Careers Panel:
Showcasing different opportunities in medicine

A major initiative of the Alumni Council is networking by career field. We are thrilled to announce that the first event of this kind took place in June!

On June 4, Steppingstone held a career panel at Children's Hospital in Boston that brought together Scholars and Alumni who are currently working or interested in pursuing a career in medicine. Over pizza, panelists discussed their career paths, including coursework, internships, and scholarship opportunities, and took questions from Scholars. Eighteen Scholars and Alumni heard from four experts in the field. The panel included Alumna Luana Bessa '97, who recently earned a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and is now working as a licensed psychologist at Commonwealth Psychology Associates in Boston. Other panelists, all from Children's Hospital, included Vincent Chiang, MD, a doctor who is also a professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School; Eva Gomez, MSN RN-BC CPN, a nurse and hospital administrator; and Bola Bukoye, MSPH, an improvement analyst.

The next event in the series will focus on the financial field and will be held in January 2015. Please contact Alison Levy (alevy@tsf.org) or Matt Waldman (mwaldman@tsf.org) for more information, or if you would like to attend or participate as a panelist.

Field Representatives

Steppingstone’s Alumni network is a great resource for Scholars and Alumni who would like to learn more about starting a career in a certain field. If you would like to connect with an Alumnus/a in your field, please visit Steppingstone’s website (www.tsf.org/alumni-career-representatives/) for a list of field representatives who would be happy to speak with you. You will then be prompted to contact Alison Levy (alevy@tsf.org) to get connected.

Giving Back

Donald Medor ’01

Currently working as a staff assistant in the Operations and Finance Department at Harvard Business School, Donald Medor ’01 has spent many of his Saturdays at Boston Latin Academy volunteering as a tutor for Steppingstone Scholars through SMASH (Saturday Mentoring and Study Hall).

As an Alumnus of Steppingstone and Boston Latin Academy, Donald adds great value to the education of current Scholars, and is committed to improving his community and the children living in it. “Steppingstone has opened a lot of great doors for me, and giving back is a way that I can show my gratitude.” Donald’s contribution enriches the environment, as he is able to serve as a role model to younger Scholars and give them an idea of what life is like after high school and college. “I want to see these Scholars succeed and surpass what I’ve accomplished.”

Donald says, “Every time I walk around the city, I see kids wearing their blue Steppingstone backpacks with a sense of pride. We share a similar experience; while we as Alumni have already gone down our Steppingstone path, current Scholars are just beginning. It’s our responsibility to help them on their path, and to pay it forward. I may not be able to contribute financially yet, but I’m still making a huge difference in their lives.”

Donald is one of many Alumni who volunteer with Steppingstone, and we are always looking for more! If you are interested in volunteering at SMASH or giving back in another way, please email Alison Levy at alevy@tsf.org.
Thank You, Alumni!

We are so grateful to those of you who have already made a gift to Steppingstone this year. Every dollar donated by Alumni is valuable, and no gift is too small.

Kevon Boatswain ’91
Ivan DeJesus ’92
Dr. Alicia Genisca ’93
Kevin Tran ’94
Rochelle Williams-Belizaire ’94
Donavan Brown ’95
Jennifer Charles ’95
Stephond Goler ’95
My Dzi Le ’95
José Vega ’95
Joy Kogut ’96
Carlos Pacheco ’96
Kaitlin Barry Pellerin ’96
Stephen Mak ’97
Vivian Ng ’97
Mary-Margaret Oppus ’97
Elizabeth St. Victor ’98
Darian Reid-Sturgis ’99
Lamarr Rollins ’99
Robyn E. Gibson ’00
Natanaelle Orisma ’00
Abigail Richardson ’03
Uyen Le ’04
Teori Shaw ’04

Do you remember reading To Kill a Mockingbird when you were a Scholar? Or receiving your Steppingstone backpack? A donation of $5.00 covers the cost of a book for a current Scholar and a donation of $30.00 covers the cost of a backpack.

Visit www.tsf.org to donate.

Alumni Reunion 2014

Alumni Reunion was a huge success, drawing Alumni from nearly every Steppingstone class. Attendees heard from Valentine Ora ’07, a graduate of Milton Academy and a rising freshman at Brown University. Valentine recalled his early experience at Steppingstone and spoke about the many new services for Scholars in high school and college.

Guests enjoyed drinks and appetizers, a great raffle, and perusing their old Steppingstone yearbooks! Danielle (Boyd) Heard, Yully Cha, and Scott Knox even made it out for the event!

See more photos from Reunion on the Alumni Facebook page at www.facebook.com/alum.steppingstone.

Spring Swing

In May, Steppingstone held its first annual Spring Swing party. We are so grateful to all of the Alumni attendees who made the evening so special, including Offiong Bassey ’97, who performed at the event!

Professional reunion photos credited to Samantha Yanofsky/SLY Photography
Alumni Visit Milton Academy

This summer, Steppingstone held its second annual Alumni Visit Day at Milton Academy. On August 7, A.T. Desta '99, Emely Orellana '97, Stephen Mak '97, and Max Clermont '01 toured The Steppingstone Academy and the College Success Academy and ate lunch with young Scholars from both programs.

Over sandwiches, Scholars and Alumni compared notes on the hardest and the best things about Steppingstone, and Scholars asked Alumni about the steps they took in high school to achieve their college and career goals.