



December E-Newsletter

From the Founder: The Power of Grit to Secure Our Next 20 Years

Friends, Family, and Fellow Changemakers,

For the past 20 years, our journey at AASuccess has been defined by the silent, relentless work of building a foundation, whereby a taxing period was often marked by the constant challenge of fundraising and stabilizing our core mission.

I am writing this near the end of my three-month physical presence in Vietnam, a trip dedicated to launching the **AAS DECA integrative medicine prototype**. This project is more than just a healthcare initiative; it is a crucial, high-stakes proof point for our future.

This prototype validates my deepest belief: that the grit and courage we instill in our youngsters, like those who lead our projects, is the exact same spirit needed to secure our organization's next era.

While I focused on this transition abroad, our **US Operations Team**, led by the next generation of AAS leaders, has done a spectacular job maintaining the integrity and quality of our foundation back home. They managed the operations engine at the suite 502, 6521 building in Falls Church, with discipline and dedication.

Crucially, this bold leap into the **hybrid model** (leveraging our non-profit mission with the for-profit US-IBDC arm) was only possible because of the unwavering trust from our senior core team: Nguyen, Thanh, Tom, Zhe, Len, Vihan, Alif, and many others. They didn't just support the idea; they encouraged me to take the risk, knowing that our survival required us to transition from a single non-profit to a self-sustaining entity focused on spearheading projects in healthcare and human capital systems.

This journey has been risky, requiring countless **crucial conversations** and a fundamental belief that our AAS system works. To the youngsters who inspire us, and to the senior core members who supported me fully in overcoming these challenges: Thank you.

With immense gratitude,

Dave Nguyen
Founder, AASuccess



Field Report: A Student-Led Engine of Ownership

The last quarter at AASuccess is defined by a critical blend of professional expectations and peer-to-peer support, driven by alumni leaders who are former students of AAS. The Arlington office on Saturday morning isn't just a place for meetings or homework; it's where students take ownership of their own growth and the organization itself.

The Work of Ownership



Our alumni managers (**Liem, Angela, and Lara**) showcase a strong, practical organizational drive that transforms the four-hour Saturday gathering into a focused work session. The office manager leading operations expertly navigates the transition following the intense **Shark Tank** project. This leadership involves far more than simple participation; it embodies active management:

- **Project Management:** Recognizing the need to celebrate success ("congratulations to all the groups!") while immediately pivoting to the next phase of community building.
- **Accountability & Logistics:** Instituting and enforcing mandatory processes, such as the **attendance form** at the start of the month and signing up for quarterly check-ins.
- **Community Building:** Organizing activities, like the mandatory-yet-fun personal presentation slides, to ensure current students actively connect and build relationships through the creative work of delivering just one slide of content.

The energy expended during those four hours in our Arlington office is not passive; it is active management, organization, and mandatory personal development, all led by those who mastered the AAS System for years.

Empathy in Mentorship



The communications this month between our mentor and operations managers also underscore the **depth of personal investment** that former students bring to the mentorship process. When a high-achieving student is navigating the pressures of college applications, alumni leaders work together diligently. They aim to successfully balance the need for students to stay connected to in-person projects with the preservation of vital, established mentorship relationships, ensuring that student support in AAS is both personal and professional.



Insight: The Genius of Peer-Led Management

The core success of AASuccess lies in its **self-sustaining engine of leadership**. Our former students, who rise into these supervisory roles, offer a distinct advantage that no other model with typical paid staff can replicate because they possess shared experience and empathy.

They've "walked in their shoes," understanding precisely why students arrive early on a Saturday - not just to follow instructions, but to be a part of the engine themselves. They embody the AAS core values, making any small or big tasks tangible and aspirational. They manage complex operations with dedication, motivated simply by a mission to ensure the organization continues to run for the next generation. This credible, peer-based authority is the ultimate key for justifying not only the efficiency of building all-around-success individuals but also inspiring active citizens to help the very community that has supported them. This cycle is how AASuccess is defined and has last for almost 20 years.



My First Quarter Joining AASuccess



My name is **Nguyen Hoang Ha My**, and I'm 17 years old. I live in Hanoi, Vietnam, which means I attend AASuccess remotely since I can't join the sessions at the office in person. (Fun fact: I was named after a beautiful beach in Vietnam!)

My First Challenges: Learning Ownership

My first big activity as an AASuccess student was participating in the **Biohealth Conference in Hanoi**. Since I was brand new to organizing events and to AASuccess activities, I felt confused and relied heavily on my seniors for guidance. I quickly learned the importance of initiative when Nguyen asked me to translate conference banners. I had to complete the translations in just four hours, and while it wasn't perfect, it showed me how quickly I could respond to an urgent need. Even though I know everyone starts somewhere, I left that project wanting to contribute more and take full ownership next time.

Embracing Proactivity

In the following months, I embraced the **AASuccess core values**. I recently attended the **AAS DECA Retreat** in Tả Phìn Hồ, Hà Giang. There, I was able to step up and help much more actively, assisting with setting up the venue and managing the member list.

A highlight was helping **Dave** and his colleague, **Arin**. Since the retreat was held in Vietnamese and Arin couldn't understand the content, I stepped in to translate the lectures and help her navigate the course. This was a direct way to use my skills to support a fellow member.

On a different note, I was also bitten by a leech while trekking, despite preparing to avoid them! I quickly realized the bite wasn't scary or painful, even though the blood wouldn't stop flowing.

The Lesson: Fear Is Just the Unknown



That small moment on the trekking path reinforced a major lesson I learned earlier when I was the **MC for the Biohealth Conference**. I hadn't spoken on stage in two years, so I was terrified and tripped over my words at first. But the more I spoke, the more I got used to the stage presence and was able to speak fluently.

I realized I would have never reached that fluency if I hadn't agreed to be the MC in the first place, just like I wouldn't have known the leech's bite was harmless if I hadn't gone trekking. **Fear is just your mind reacting to the unknown**. The only way to stop feeling afraid is to try, to face that fear, and understand it.

I'm happy and grateful for the growth I've achieved during my first four months in AASuccess. I'm so glad I decided to be a part of this organization, and I'm genuinely excited to see how much more I will learn and grow in the future.

Ha My Nguyen Hoang
James Madison High School, AASuccess Student



Shark Tank Success: A Program

With so many students joining AASuccess at once (seven students!!) we're entering a new era of AASuccess. We've nearly doubled in size, which means there are many new faces around the office. Being in the office and spending time with everyone is definitely one of my favorite parts of what we do, so it's been so fun getting to know all the new members of our AASuccess family.

With so many new students, I was especially excited to host **Shark Tank Success!** This program, which we created last year, challenges students to team up and pitch their own community projects to a panel of "Sharks." It's designed to empower students by enhancing their public speaking, self-advocacy, leadership, teamwork, and project planning skills. When a project is selected, students collaborate with their team and a "Shark" to bring their idea to life, overseeing everything from planning to execution.

Last year, we had several successful projects come from it, including Hillary and Mason's Education Camp, so we had high hopes for this year and the students did not disappoint.

Even though this was most of our students' first month at AASuccess, they quickly adapted and learned how Shark Tank works. Each team was led by a senior student and included newer students. It was really cool to see the senior students take the lead, the newer students jump right in, and everyone learn from one another.

As a Shark, I was incredibly impressed by all three teams' presentations. Each group presented confidently, handled questions on the spot, and came up with creative, well-thought-out ideas.

Here's a sneak peek at their projects:



Toys 4 Tails – a dog-toy making clinic to benefit local shelter dogs

Net Impact – a volleyball tournament that raises money to assemble supply kits for homeless shelters



Reactiv8 – an activities fair introducing students to new hobbies, encouraging less screen time, and raising awareness about the benefits of reducing screen time

Shark Tank was a big deal especially for a lot of our new students, who have never been put in a situation like this. I'm so proud of all of them for their hard work and can't wait for you to see everything they have in store!

Look out for their Shark Tank projects coming soon!!



Angela Le
Operations Team Member
Student Project & Scholarship Head

Insight: The Value of Peer-Led Management

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Keep the Engine Running with Just \$10/Month!!!

At AASuccess, we believe that every young person deserves the chance to learn, grow, and thrive through life skills training—not to be burdened with fundraising to keep our programs alive. That's why we are reaching out to you, our community, to join us in sustaining this mission.

A monthly gift of just **\$10** can go a long way in helping us maintain our office operations, provide a stable environment for our students, and keep the “engine” of our programs running smoothly. When you contribute, you're not just helping with overhead—you're directly empowering students to stay focused on what matters most: developing leadership, emotional intelligence, and career-life readiness.

We are also excited to share some great news: **AASuccess is now officially listed in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)!** Federal employees and retirees can now select AASuccess as a beneficiary using our **CFC ID: 88404**.

Your support—whether through the CFC or direct monthly giving—ensures that our students can continue to transform their futures without distraction. Together, we can keep this powerful cycle of mentorship and learning alive.



Join us today with a \$10/month pledge and help fuel the future of our youth!!

Donate online: AASuccess.org/donate

AASuccess: Perfecting the Act of Giving Back

6521 Arlington Blvd., Suite 502, Falls Church, VA 22042

www.aasuccess.org

A community without boundaries, built on the principle that when we invest in character development alongside competence, everyone thrives.