

MARY KATE

ELEMENTARY PROFESSIONAL MENTOR TO THE ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR

“Good evening. My name is Mary Kate Sullivan—though Kamara used to call me Mary Cake. I am the Assistant Director of Program for our Elementary Cohort, and I had the privilege of being Kamara’s mentor for six years. We are honored to present this year’s Achiever of the Year Award to Kamara Rodriguez - a young person who has defied the odds and demonstrated remarkable growth during her time at Friends-Boston.



Kamara was the first Achiever that I was matched with over 10 years ago, and she has shaped me into the mentor I am today. She was a shy and playful girl who struggled to regulate her feelings. Our outings became sacred times where we worked through things that upset her. Art has always been a passion of Kamara’s, so we channeled this into a coping skill that helped her.

Kamara’s elementary years were filled with a lot of transitions. At one point she had to commute from Nashua New Hampshire to Roxbury just to go to the school and for our outings. We leaned into her art as an anchor of stability. When the pandemic hit and we couldn’t do regular outings, we would spend hours sitting on her porch where she’d show me the impressive animals she made out of the rubber bands.

During our time together, she taught me the power of consistency and patience. There were countless moments when her life would go sideways, and I learned that showing up every week, fostering her passion, and giving her a space to express herself freely was more valuable than anything I could say. There is truly no one more deserving than Kamara.”

KADIJAH

ADOLESCENT PROFESSIONAL MENTOR TO THE ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR

“Good evening, my name is Kadjiah, and I became Kamara’s mentor almost two years ago when she transitioned into her adolescent years. I learned pretty quickly that Kamara loves art, does not enjoy sports games, and has a true gift for storytelling. Most afternoons Kamara and I would spend our time discussing her future goals and aspirations while she casually created artwork I believe belonged in a gallery.

Initially, Kamara didn’t see college in her future. We talked about the future she wants, and that she is both capable and deserving of the opportunity to go to college. It was through these conversations that I learned the full extent of Kamara’s resilience. She shared stories from a childhood marked by difficult moments, loss, and transitions—but she also shared stories of joy, strength, and love. She showed me that hardship is just a small part of a young person’s story.

Despite all she has faced, she’s even grown in how she showed up for herself and for others. Kamara, who once struggled to articulate her own emotions, is now supporting others as a leader in our Youth Leaders in Mental Health program, helping elementary students navigate their own mental health. I am so proud of her perseverance and courage to build a future for herself. Her hard work paid off when she was accepted to not one, not two but four colleges, and she will be attending college full time studying chemistry in the fall!

Kamara, You have shown the world that you don’t have to be defined by your circumstances. I am so excited to see all the remarkable things you will do. We can’t wait for you to meet her, here is a little snapshot of the amazing Kamara Rodriguez.”

[WATCH THE ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR VIDEO HERE](#)