



**August 2020**

## **Next Steps at Vanderbilt Events**

*\*All events will be virtual until further notice.*

### **Virtual Open House**

Please join us for a Virtual Open House! During our Open House, prospective students, parents, and guests will learn about classes, internships, social opportunities, and more. Once you register for a Virtual Open House, you will be sent a link to join. Please come with questions as you will be able to type your questions into the chat box.

#### **2020 Open House Dates**

Friday, August 20, 2020 (2:30 - 4:30 p.m.)

Monday, October 5, 2020 (5:00 - 6:30 p.m.)

Thursday, November 12, 2020 (2:30 - 4:00 p.m.)

### **Virtual College Night**

During our Virtual College Night, prospective students and parents will learn about the different aspects of our program from staff, alumni, and current students. First we will have a panel of speakers answering questions about their experience with Next Steps. Then guests will have the opportunity to ask questions to representatives from all aspects of the program (social, academic,

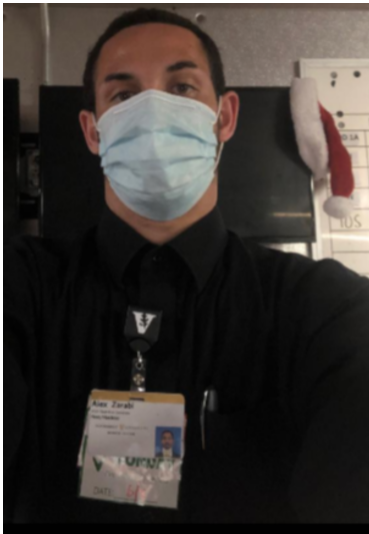
career, residential, financial aid, etc.) through the use of breakout rooms. Once registered for a Virtual College Night, you will be sent a link to join.

### 2020 Virtual College Night Dates

Thursday, September 24, 2020 (5:00 - 6:30)

Thursday, November 5, 2020 (5:00 - 6:30)

[Click here to register for a Open House or College Night](#)



## Alumni Spotlight

*Steven Greiner, Alumni Coordinator and Recruitment Assistant*

Alexander Zarabi graduated from Next Steps at Vanderbilt in 2020. He is currently a host with the Nutrition Services Department at the Vanderbilt Medical Center. Alex helps prepare trays of food and deliver them to patients, as well as taking patient orders. His favorite part of his job is when he delivers food in the Labor and Delivery Unit because he gets to see the newborns. When Alex is not at work, he enjoys working out and playing basketball with his friends and his brother.



## Next Steps for a Change

*Emilee Bauer, Program Coordinator*

Plant for a Change is the first for-profit plant business in Nashville co-managed by team members with disabilities. The business is committed to cultivating native habitats by

educating the public on the value of gardening for wildlife and sustaining greener neighborhoods. They also strive to support native wildlife in this region by increasing the access and exposure of native plants. Plant for a Change sells products at the Farmers Market that provide water, food, places to raise young and cover for native wildlife.

Next Steps students and alumni, with the guidance of Fields, cultivate native plants and seeds, assemble documents, file taxes and paperwork, market and sell the products, and participate in meetings and trainings with local partners and environmental communities.

CEO, Nathan Fields, has a special connection with Next Steps at Vanderbilt. “When I was a graduate student, Peach came and spoke to our class and taught us about self-advocacy. Since then, I’ve been hooked. I got plugged in as a Best Buddy, became an Ambassadors, and some graduate students and I started a campus faith community group where students could pray together and read books together. Dr. Carter’s work inspired me to rethink traditional ways of creating programs to and for people with disabilities and instead, find ways to meaningfully include individuals with disabilities in the entire process of forming programs alongside individuals with disabilities.”

The idea for Plant for a Change was cultivated through the community prayer and study meetings, B3 (Believe Belong, Beloved). Diamond Grigsby, Next Steps Alumni, expressed her concerns for people with disabilities finding employment. “With 30 million plus people looking for jobs now, it’s only going to make it more difficult for people who have disabilities to find meaningful employment,” said Nathan Fields, “so, we started praying for jobs. But then, as we talked through our concerns, we then moved to praying that we might be able to create jobs for people. We hope we can be the answer to some people’s prayers, and believe we will one day be able to hire people with and without disabilities to have meaningful employment alongside one another.”

The Plant for a Change team has prepared an online shop at [www.plantforachange.com](http://www.plantforachange.com) to sell items on social media and online. While the business can currently sell at the Farmers Market in person on the weekends, they also provide delivery and porch side pickup services.

“We encourage people to follow us on Facebook or Instagram @plantforachange and to check out our monthly catalogs. We have an email subscription folks can join at [bit.ly/pfacsub](http://bit.ly/pfacsub). If friends of Next Steps need soil, mulch, native plants, landscaping

advice, birdhouses, bird feeders, bird seed, we promise we'll offer quality products made and delivered by quality people," Said Fields, "Dollars given to our business go to paying a competitive wage for our team members, managing our online website, paying our bills, and sustaining our inventory."

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Next Steps at Vanderbilt Website



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