



February 6, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Monica Charette, shineoncass@gmail.com, 207-314-6996

ShineOnCass Foundation and AYCC Launch “Shine Together” Youth Mentoring Program

Oakland, Maine — ShineOnCass Foundation, in partnership with Alford Youth & Community Center (AYCC) in Waterville, is proud to announce the launch of **Shine Together**, a new youth mentoring program to foster meaningful connections, confidence, and community among young people in Oakland.

Shine Together pairs students from Messalonskee High School with children in kindergarten through fifth grade attending the AYCC After School Program at Atwood Primary School in Oakland. Through weekly, one-to-one mentoring, students build positive relationships centered on kindness, encouragement, shared interests and positive role modeling.

High school mentors (Bigs) are carefully screened and trained before being thoughtfully matched with younger mentees (Littles) based on personality and interests. Matches meet weekly after school to read, play board games, do crafts, work on homework, build trust, and create consistent, supportive connections. The program currently supports 11 matches at the Atwood site, with plans to expand the program to other local communities.

Shine Together is led by ShineOnCass volunteers serving as weekly program coordinators who facilitate group activities, lead kindness initiatives, and provide ongoing match support. AYCC After School Program staff provides program training and oversight, ensuring match safety and success.

Shine Together was created to honor Cassidy Charette, a 17-year-old Messalonskee student and community volunteer, who died in a hayride accident in 2014. Charette’s legacy of kindness and service continues through the ShineOnCass Foundation. Shine Together was developed to meet a local need for youth mentoring after the recent closing of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mid-Maine, which included ending the successful ShineOnCass youth mentoring program that served hundreds of local kids for 11 years.

Monica Charette, executive director and founder of the ShineOnCass Foundation, said she wanted to create a mentoring program that would support local kids and give young adults the opportunity to participate in meaningful community service.

“Mentoring is a significant part of Cassidy’s legacy,” Charette said about her daughter, a youth mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters who was just two weeks shy of meeting her first “Little Sister” at the AYCC when she died.



“Shine Together mentoring program continues Cassidy’s passion for supporting youth—empowering them to discover their strengths and build a path toward their best future,” Charette said. “When young people feel seen, supported, and valued, something special happens on both sides of the mentoring relationship. We’re helping our youth shine—together.”

AYCC Chief Operating Officer Patrick Guerrette said they are proud to partner with ShineOnCass to ensure more youth in the community have access to meaningful, supportive mentoring relationships.

“At AYCC, we believe that when young people are connected with the right mentor, the impact can be immediate and lasting, opening doors to future opportunity and success. We are grateful to work alongside ShineOnCass in honoring Cassidy’s memory and continuing her legacy.”

For more information about Shine Together youth mentoring, visit shineoncass.org and clubaycc.org.

###

Photos and Cutlines:



Messalonskee student and youth mentor Caraline Lee and her “Little” Marshall Veilleux build Legos during their first match meeting at Shine Together, a new youth mentoring program held at Atwood Primary School in Oakland, created by ShineOnCass Foundation and Alford Youth and Community Center.



Drayton Garceau answers his “get to know you” question with the support of his mentor Maggie Hickey at Shine Together—a new youth mentoring program aimed at fostering positive, one-to-one relationships centered on kindness, encouragement, shared interests, and positive role modeling.

(Photos Continued)



“Big” Kiana Carrier and her “Little” Layla McBreairty are all smiles getting to know each other while playing their favorite fishing game at the first match meeting of Shine Together.



Avery Gurski and her mentor Messalonskee High School sophomore Madelyn Gagnon discover their shared love for art as they begin their new friendship at a new youth mentoring program created in memory of Cassidy Charette called “Shine Together.”



ShineOnCass program coordinators Erinn Michaud (left) and Monica Charette, holding a picture of her daughter Cassidy, welcome matches and share how the new Shine Together youth mentoring program was created in honor of Cassidy’s passion for helping kids shine.