



Agency Name: Broome County Urban League
Program Name: Saratoga and Carlisle Youth Centers
Program Success Story:

Marquise Jackson

Marquise Jackson is a resident of the Binghamton Housing Authority's Saratoga Terrace. His father is out of the area and his mother has severe substance abuse issues and is only on the scene now and then. Marquise's brother is in jail and he lives with his grandmother. The BHA Youth Centers have always been a refuge for him and he has been a part of the program for at least six years. In the beginning, the staff had its challenges with Marquise, but our unit director Jackie Jamison and the staff have taken him "under their wing." They watch out for him and have made him part of the "community center family." Marquise has made major changes in his life including taking on a youth leadership role at the community center when we instituted the Phoenix Gang Prevention Program. In addition, Marquise has pulled himself out of the Columbus Alternative School, is staying out of trouble, and is attending Binghamton High School.

Anthony Curry

Anthony Curry is a 21-year-old youth advocate for Broome County Gang Prevention (BCGP). Since first coming to BCGP, he has made very important personal accomplishments. Referred by probation, Anthony came into the offices and sat slumped in a chair; the look on his face said it all. At 14 years-old Anthony was a gang member. He was depressed, he lacked direction, he was feeling hopeless and needed Gang Prevention's help.

Jurell Spivey, a Gang Prevention educator, became Anthony's mentor. At first they just talked. They talked about Anthony's situation, societal issues and pathways for change; they would talk for hours at a time. As their bond grew, Jurell started bringing Anthony to his workshops he was teaching. Jurell did this, partially to occupy Anthony's time, but also so he could benefit from the lessons. Then, to Anthony's surprise and anger, Jurell started calling on Anthony to participate in the workshops. Put on the spot, Anthony had no choice but to start teaching the lessons. Somewhere along the way, Anthony's resistance softened and he started making important changes in his life. At about 17 years old, Anthony made the decision to give up his gang affiliation.

Anthony is no longer on Jurell's case load, however, he is no stranger to BCGP. For over three years Anthony has volunteered as an older-to-younger peer mentor, assisting Jurell and Dorian with their responsibilities as outreach workers. At 19, Anthony started as a volunteer at the After School Enrichment Program at Binghamton Housing Authority's Carlisle Apartments. It was clear to everyone that this was his calling. Anthony has now been employed with the program for over a year.

Anthony could not have joined the After School Program at a better time; some of the youth were showing interest in gang participation and had begun wearing gang colors and bandanas. Relying on the skills he had acquired through his relationship with Jurell and Dorian, Anthony adapted and taught the Gang Prevention curriculum at the after school program. He facilitated very important and honest discussions with the youth. Through these lessons the youths' perception of gangs was changed. Anthony practiced real life scenarios with the young people, teaching them how to avoid feeling pressure from their friends and family members. In this time

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Anthony has developed incredibly valuable relationships with the youth. He's brought the word "respect" to the program; the youth use the word to remind each other to listen and be respectful. Furthermore, through the curriculum, the youth participants developed closer relationships, a sense of belonging and they have learned to rely on each other for support.

Recognizing the needs in the Carlisle community, Anthony has been working with BHA staff to develop a Saturday youth program, where he will volunteer his time and serve as one of the lead coordinators of a program that will facilitate weekend physical activity and civic engagement for the neighborhood youth. There is no way to measure the impact that Anthony's work has had on the future of the Carlisle community.

Anthony is looking to learn about grant writing and would like to obtain additional training and education on youth programming.