Dreamers

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Bainum Family Foundation℠

Dreamers: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Bainum Family Foundation would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous contributions to this book. Without their commitment, *Dreamers: In Their Own Words* would not have been possible.*

Inspiration and primary support for the Dreamers program came from Mr. Stewart Bainum. Twenty-five years ago, he acted on his belief in the strength of the human spirit to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds, and the responsibility he felt for sharing his gifts of time, talent and treasure with the 67 Dreamers at Kramer Junior High School in Washington, D.C. Phyllis Rumbarger and Steve Bumbaugh turned the vision into reality by providing leadership and coordination of the I Have A Dream program and by personally mentoring and supporting a great many of the Dreamers during and beyond the program.

The historical data in *Dreamers: In Their Own Words* is drawn from the extensive data collection and reporting of Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh. Their guidance, insight and feedback in helping reconnect the Foundation with the Dreamers were instrumental. KK Ottesen, the writer and photographer, has skillfully and artfully presented the Dreamers' experiences in a narrative that keeps you reading and leaves you with a visceral understanding of the struggles, celebrations and legacy of this program. We also thank Child Trends for their professional expertise in the data collection and analysis phase of this project. Finally, we offer our sincere thanks to the Dreamers and their families for once again allowing us into their lives and giving us a window through which to understand and learn from their experiences.

This book is dedicated to all the Dreamers and to the legacy of the journey they began together so many years ago.

* The Bainum Family Foundation was known as the Commonweal Foundation during the time of the I Have a Dream Program and at the initial publication of this book in 2013. Because the book is based on personal interviews, for this reprinting, we have kept the name Commonweal when it was directly mentioned during an interview.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1988, a year in which the murder rate in Washington, D.C., jumped 64%, Stewart Bainum selected Kramer Junior High School, located in Anacostia in the southeast part of the District, as the site of the I Have a Dream (IHAD) program he would sponsor over the next decade. Mr. Bainum selected Kramer for several reasons: Its surrounding neighborhood was ground zero for gun violence fueled by the city's growing crack cocaine epidemic; a very high number of its students lived below the poverty line; and the school's standardized tests scores lagged behind all but those of two other District schools. Half of the incoming seventh graders (67; 26 boys and 41 girls) were adopted to be Dreamers. Academically, they were a cross-section of the total incoming grade, i.e., by school standards one-third were high-achieving, one-third were average achievers and one-third were achieving well below the average.

Following the model of the national I Have a Dream Foundation, the Bainum Family Foundation's IHAD program was designed to prepare Dreamers for college and to provide post-secondary scholarships to those who graduated from high school. The Foundation developed the following mission statement that set the tone and guided the programming:

> *"Through the efforts of the I Have A Dream Foundation, each child in the Kramer class will be provided support to develop into a trustworthy, caring human being with a positive self-image, a sense of community responsibility, a desire for academic achievement and a passion for excellence in all things."*

Educational services provided to the Dreamers included identification and programming for students with learning disabilities; referrals to specialized and enrichment programs for gifted students; self-contained and tutorial sessions for average learners; summer programming for everyone, which included intensive academics, enrichment, career and college exposure, and community service; and boarding school placement. The program also continuously focused on promoting Dreamers' personal and career development, with a particular emphasis on exposing them to the world beyond their immediate neighborhood. During the summers, Dreamers participated in vocational assessment evaluations, completed programming in job finding and retention, and worked in summer positions monitored by the Foundation's IHAD staff. Two full-time staff members, Phyllis Rumbarger and Steve Bumbaugh ran the program day to day, leading and coordinating a complex web of programming with what one of them termed a "loose confederation" of tutors, mentors, summer staff and volunteers. Throughout their tenure with the program, and beyond, both Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh provided intensive educational, social and emotional support for the Dreamers.

Beginning in 1991, the Foundation also provided Dreamers who were experiencing particularly difficult circumstances at home and at school the opportunity to attend boarding school. The belief was that Mount Vernon Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school in Ohio (and Mr. Bainum's alma mater), would provide a more stable living and learning environment. Ten Dreamers went to boarding school for at least one year. The experiences of these students informed what later became the Foundation's Pathways to Success program.

In 1994, as many of the Dreamers graduated and a number enrolled in college or other training, the Foundation provided its promised scholarships. Following the national model, the scholarship was equivalent to in-state tuition, in this case at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), for up to $4,000. As you will read, there seems to have been a widespread misunderstanding about whether IHAD offered a full college scholarship (it did not) or the equivalent of in-state tuition.

After June 1994, no attempt was made to stay in touch with Dreamers who did not contact the Foundation. Phyllis Rumbarger continued on with the Foundation, becoming the Executive Director until her retirement in 2009, while Steve Bumbaugh pursued his postgraduate studies. As a result, there are not accurate records of the number of Dreamers who may have eventually completed high school and/or postsecondary education without the assistance of the IHAD program. Historical quantitative and anecdotal data collected by Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh show that it is probable that 48 of 67 Dreamers (72%) completed high school. The neighborhood comparison group achieved a 27% graduation rate by June 1994.

So in 2012, nearly a quarter-century after Mr. Bainum and 67 young Dreamers first gathered in Kramer's auditorium for their group photo, the Foundation began efforts to reconnect with the Dreamers. We wanted to see how the Dreamers were doing, to share that information with Mr. Bainum and his family, to talk with the Dreamers about their experiences with the program in an effort to understand how well (or not) the program was able to meet their needs at the time, and to reflect on ways the Foundation might be able to improve its efforts going forward.

The stories you will read are individual accounts* by Dreamers, a Dreamer's parent, Phyllis Rumbarger and Steve Bumbaugh. Together, these individual stories offer a more nuanced look at the program's impact and the many ways in which the experience influenced all who were a part of it.

The process of reconnecting and gathering these stories has revealed a remarkable depth and continued connection among the Dreamers, with the individuals who worked with them on behalf of the Foundation, and with the Bainum family. The act of reconnecting, sharing and listening rekindled many of these wonderful relationships and has spawned an inspiring documentary film, *Southeast 67* by Red Spark Films (www.southeast67.com). Two new scholarship fund also have come out of the reconnection efforts: a fund for the children of the Dreamers (at the Bainum Family Foundation) and another for Dreamers still working hard to finish their educations, and for their families (Fulfilling the Dream: The Southeast 67 Scholarship Fund, www.fulfillingthedream.org).

In the philanthropic and educational arenas, it is all too rare to have the benefit of speaking with children served by programs when they are adults and thus better able to articulate and evaluate their experiences. Because such feedback is invaluable, our hope is that sharing the stories in this volume will contribute many positive insights to the educational and philanthropic discussions of the day.

* All interviews are crafted from the subject's own words and reflect that individual's views, not those of the Bainum Family Foundation.

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IHAD Staff

* Indicates data from Child Trends (2013). Summary of survey and focus group findings from the Commonweal Foundation Dreamers Project.
** Indicates data from Rumbarger, P. (1994). "I Have A Dream" Program Report 1988-1994.
+ Indicates data from Rumbarger, P. (1994). "I Have A Dream" Program Statistics Report 1994.
++ Indicates data from Rumbarger, P. (1995). Statistics from IHAD 1/15/95 report.

Steve Bumbaugh

(IHAD Project Coordinator)
Philanthropic Executive

I think this program was able to break a cycle of poverty that goes back to the 17th or 18th century, back to slavery, for a significant number of people. I think that's pretty awesome! And that's going to continue with their kids. So I think it was worth it, and I think Mr. Bainum should be very proud of what he did.

My first day at Kramer, I had my shirt and tie on, I was 23, and some guy who was on something – probably crack, because he was really jittery and hyper – stumbles across the schoolyard and picks a fight with some kid. A very tough kid who just tattoos the guy. And now there are a bunch of boys jumping on this guy – not that he didn't ask for it – but it was a pretty vicious scene. I'm looking at the 6'3" assistant principal, who's not doing anything, and I'm like, *Well, I'm going to break this up*. So I go and I break it up. And this guy, who's on drugs so he's not rational, he wants to fight me. I'm like, "Look, man, I just saved you. I don't know these kids, and it's probably just best for you to leave right now." And he's got blood all over his face, and he wipes it, wipes it on my shirt, and then walks away. So before I had been to my first class at Kramer, my white shirt was covered in blood. I was like, *Wow*.

That year, I saw a kid shot on the playground. I actually saw him get shot. And then one day at lunch in the cafeteria – I would always eat lunch in the cafeteria with the kids – I see this kid. He was this very troubled boy who caused a lot of problems at school, and he's walking really strangely and he's moaning in a really animalistic kind of way. So I looked at him – I didn't quite get what was going on – and I hear all these chairs being knocked over and all these kids are getting away from him. And I look, and he pulls a butcher knife out of his back. And collapses on the floor. I run over there, and he's got a hole in his back, like this big, and there's blood coming out like a geyser, and I thought, *God, he's going to die*. And so then the assistant principal who didn't help me break up the fight at the beginning of the school year, comes over and puts the boy on his lap and tells me, "Call 911." So I tell Martece [a Dreamer], I think it was, "Go to the office and call 911," and she runs off and does that, and I run into the kitchen because I'm like, *This kid's going to bleed to death*. They had this big, huge box of white, clean rags. And I just grabbed the box and I'm putting them on his back. I don't really know what I'm doing, right, but I felt like I should do something, so I'm putting a bunch of white rags in this hole, and they just turn red immediately, and I'm just doing it over and over and over.

There were some kids who had that thing that everyone talks about now, they call it **resiliency**. They just had it. For whatever reason. Kids who grew up in horrific circumstances every goddamn day, who were just living nightmares, but still made it.

Then that afternoon on the playground, somehow people tie the stabbing to a beef that these two different neighborhoods are having. So boys from these two different neighborhoods start fighting. And the whole school is on the playground. And I'm like, *My God, we're going to have a riot*, right? It's about 10 boys, and there was construction going on at Kramer, and these kids start grabbing wood. And a bunch of them are on this one kid, hitting him with wood. And again, none of the *men* are doing anything – and there are some big men on the staff there. And these are 14- and 15-year old guys, right, and they're big. So I go there and I start breaking it up, and a couple of my really tough Dreamers help me break it up, but it's *insanity.* This place is *crazy*. Just the level of day-to-day violence in the goddamn school – which is considered a safe haven – I had never seen anything like it. It was insanity. It was in-san-i-ty.

A typical I Have a Dream program was a mentor program. They would hire one project coordinator, whose job was to inspire 70 kids growing up in the middle of the drug wars in the toughest neighborhoods in the United States. That was well-intentioned at the time, but it doesn't work. **I think that Mr. Bainum put a lot more financial resources into his program than the other sponsors.** He had two full-time staff. So he probably, in salaries alone, tripled what the typical sponsor was paying. And the starting point was different; we were teaching. Some of those children were in class with us half the day. I'd almost say that we had something akin to a school within a school. Phyllis' [IHAD Program Director] background was as an educator. I mean, Phyllis is just a pedagogic *expert* with 25, 30 years of experience, which you don't often get. So she pretty much taught all day. She had kids with her almost every period, and she was providing instruction. We didn't have a rigid curriculum. Phyllis would be in a class with eight kids and she'd have eight different lesson plans. And she's running around doing different stuff with different kids. It wasn't this cookie-cutter stuff that you see now.

My job was a little different. I was also providing instruction – it varied from year to year, but especially the first year, a third to half the day. I also was responsible for keeping in touch and staying on top of those kids who moved out of the neighborhood and/or were going to different schools. So we had clusters of kids at different schools, and I tended to go there once or twice a week and teach. I thought that was the best way to keep in touch with them. We also identified people to be one-on-one mentors to students, so we had this kind of loose confederation of people who worked with us.

Phyllis and I were always in the homes. I was in somebody's home, oh, gosh, three or four days a week. I would say I was almost always welcome. In a sample size of three or four hundred visits, there were a handful of times it didn't go well. These are Southern black families who have a very expansive idea of what a family member is, and I just became a family member. I mean, parents of a lot of these Dreamers who have friended me on Facebook, there's a category that lists family members and they've got me listed there. I'm sure they feel the same way about Phyllis. I think they knew that Phyllis and I genuinely had their child's best interests at heart. When you look at the systems that they engaged with through their children – the education system, sometimes the criminal justice system, the public welfare system, the health care system – for the most part, the feedback these parents were getting was critical. Or at best it was indifferent. Most of the time when they got a call from the school, it was to tell them something their child had done wrong, while Phyllis and I were often telling them what their child was doing right. And that bought us the social currency to be candid when [their child] was doing things that were wrong. Because they heard from us so often, and usually it was, "Hey, I just want to tell you all the great stuff that so-and-so did." We really made a point of that. Because we worked with the families, not just the kids. So we got to know them, and they trusted us.

I think we had a really small number of kids – three or four – who never really started with the kids in seventh grade. Others, over time, dropped out of school, which was always pretty difficult. And then some would drop out of their neighborhood school but be enrolled in a GED program. I mean, it's much more complicated than the typical narrative that you hear about dropouts. Even if a child dropped out, it's not like we didn't work with them anymore. We only didn't work with them anymore if they would just outright avoid us. I was primarily the one tracking them down. I knew where they lived, I knew where their aunts lived, and their grandmothers. Sometimes they would see me coming and they would leave, you know! But we never kicked anybody out of the program, and they couldn't really drop out.

I would basically put the kids into three groups: the ones who really had horrible homes lives, like just awful. That means that their primary caretaker was probably a mother who had a substance abuse problem, and they shuffled around to various relatives, neighbors and friends. They saw violence regularly inside their home. They saw substance abuse in their home. They were probably the victims of violence – and if they were girls, and probably more boys than I suspect – sexual abuse. They really just were living nightmares. And that was a minority of our group – maybe of the 67 kids, 15 to 20.

Then there was a much larger group who, I would say, came from typical homes. **The typical home was a single parent, usually a mother, sometimes an aunt, sometimes a grandmother, who was being supported by a network of other relatives, and often the father.** There's this notion that the fathers are always absent. That's not true. A lot of the fathers were not in the home every day but had regular contact with their kids. The mother probably didn't have a high school diploma. She certainly didn't have any college education. So she was in an unstable work environment, in and out of the workforce, but working her butt off. And very, very concerned with her child's well-being. That was [the situation for] most of the kids, I don't know, 35, 30 of the kids.

Then there was a group that was relatively better off. There weren't a lot of two-parent homes, but there were a few. So maybe their mom and dad were both at home, maybe their parent had a job in the federal government that was stable, even if it didn't pay very much. Maybe they owned a home; they had a car. They would probably have been involved in their child's education even if the program hadn't come along.

Part of our life cycle was that we put more energy into the minority of truly, truly desperate kids than into the majority of kids who were working hard to make it. I think that was a fine disposition to have initially. I think after ninth grade or so we realized there were certain kids we didn't have the skills or the time to serve, while kids like Shafton Green, who was at school every day, working his butt off, maybe weren't getting the attention from us that they deserved. Because I'm running around after school trying to find kids who are in and out of the criminal justice system and who never come to school. So we decided, *Well, maybe we should be spending that time with Shafton*, you know? So we shifted our focus in high school to the kids who – not to denigrate the kids who were dropping out – were physically present.

The other thing we learned – and again, not to denigrate the students who dropped out; they were in situations that were difficult to watch and that no child should have to endure – [was that] if they were not able to accept our help, there was nothing we could do, nothing. These kids, they had parents who were HIV positive, who were dying. They had relatives who were murdered. It was crazy, crazy. So you could see how a 12- or 13-year old could just get crushed under the weight of that depression and stress. And at some point, there isn't much that two people who are in the neighborhood – and we were there a lot, long hours, 10, 12 hours a day – could do for those kids. And we were gone during the most stressful parts of the day, you know, during the middle of the night we weren't there. It was a difficult environment for all of the kids, but for some, it was too much; it was just too much.

I was there from '90 to '94; from the summer between their eighth and ninth grades until they graduated from high school. And that was the absolute height of the murder epidemic. I just didn't know how the kids took it. I mean, it affected me, and I knew that this was temporary for me, because when the kids graduated from high school I was going to go to graduate school. But even I started looking over my shoulder on my block, and I lived in Palisades with a

bunch of my college buddies, you know? For me, it was an eye-opening experience.

When I was very young I was in a rough situation. I was in foster care on the South Side of Chicago, but I got adopted by a very stable, working-class family. I got a real culture shock when I went to Yale, because I had not been around really, really wealthy people before. And I got a shock when I went to Anacostia, because I had never been around that kind of desperation. Every direction you looked in for miles around, it was just desperate.

Our Dreamers, whether they were in a stable home or not, they were in a dramatically unstable community, with murder everywhere, violence everywhere, horrific violence – every single Dreamer has witnessed somebody being murdered. All of them. I would be shocked if there is a kid who had not witnessed a murder or a shooting. I mean, I did, and I was only there for four years for 10 to 12 hours a day. They were there [for] their whole upbringing. They were living in something I would describe as a low-grade civil war. They grew up in the toughest neighborhood, in the toughest time, in one of the toughest cities in the country, and that affected all of them.

I would have boys spend the night at my house almost every Friday the first year and a half or so, or we would go on these away trips to the beach or to New York City or Ohio. And when they were away – especially when they were out of Southeast – they were such children, younger in many ways than you would expect a 14- or 15-year-old to be. And it was obvious to the adults; we were like, *Well, they just don't get to be like this*. *They just don't get to be like this in their community*. Not very often, anyway. There's a need for people to be innocent and just have fun and not have to act tough and look over their shoulders. It was fascinating to watch. Sometimes you'd see kids, like 14, 15 years old, fall asleep and have their thumb in their mouth, where they're self soothing at that age, you know? It was something.

Initially we put more energy into the minority of truly desperate kids than into the majority who were working hard to make it ... We shifted our focus in high school to the kids who were physically present. Not to denigrate the kids who were dropping out; they were in situations that no child should have to endure. But if they were not able to accept our help, there was nothing we could do – nothing.

I had this deal worked out with boys – and I would have had it worked out with girls, too, had they been interested, but they weren't – that if they met certain conditions on a weekly basis, then we could have a basketball tournament on Friday after school. Like a round-robin basketball tournament. The school let me light up the scoreboard, bring out the scoring machines and run a tournament in the gym every Friday afternoon. But the whole idea was: It's Friday afternoon, that's when the kids start getting in trouble; let's do something fun and productive and try to get their weekend off to a good start. And I tell you, we would be in that gym sometimes until 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. And we'd all be starving, but we were having fun. It wasn't just for the Dreamers either. I would let non-Dreamer kids in there, which was actually symptomatic of the whole program in many ways. We would let non-Dreamer kids come to our after-school programs, and many of them would come to our field trips and such, if they followed the rules. Often Saturday morning we'd have something, a field trip, even if it was just to an ice-skating rink or even if we just opened up the school for tutoring and we threw a ball out there to keep the kids busy. I hope that the kids felt, you know, we were trying to keep them busy and we were working on academics, because it was a school program, and because they lived in a tough, dangerous neighborhood, but we respected them, and we respected their parents. And I think that's one of the reasons why they reacted pretty well to us. We genuinely *loved* those kids. And I still do.

I would get tired sometimes, just the level of action – I'd never seen anything like it. There were times when I was just depressed. It just seemed so hopeless, you know? But I actually really liked my job. I worked at the Federal Reserve before I started this job, and I was bored out of my wits. I was there for a paycheck and a resume booster. But this, like, the kids were glad to see me in the morning. They would call me to get advice on *real* stuff. I loved it. Most of the time. But yeah, whew! It was something. It was something.

I saw a lot of stuff in this job that I had never seen before. I would be shocked when I'd see these things, upset, maybe even a little bit traumatized, but it was so different I didn't really understand it. You know, all the violence and substance abuse and that sort of stuff. But there's a story that I often come back to in my head. I remember we had this Christmas party every year, and Mr. Bainum would always get the kids a present, and usually a pretty good present. One year, the present was a really nice, white, Sony clock radio.

When the kids were presented with their presents, I noticed most were kind of taking the tape off, sliding it out, looking at what it was, putting it back and wrapping it. I thought, *What?* Because usually kids tear open presents.

So I'm driving a bunch of kids home after the Christmas party, and my last stop is Shateria; she and I were tight, so I could ask her blunt questions. **I was like, "Shateria, what is that all about?" And she kind of laughed.**

She said, "Mr. Bumbaugh, a lot of those kids, that's all they're going to get for Christmas." When she got out of the car, I just started crying.

That was the only time in four years that I cried. I was like, *Wow, that's terrible*. It's not as terrible as getting shot, but I was like, *Wow – wow*. It seems relatively minor, but I think sometimes for outsiders, the things that really begin to translate the difference are the things that they can viscerally understand. So you tell people, "Oh yeah, so-and-so's cousin got shot over the weekend." It's hard to wrap your arms around that. But a kid who doesn't get presents at Christmas – we get that.

You know one of the things I did for therapy when I was doing this job was I wrote. And I was a regular speaker. It was always rich, white audiences, and my narrative was that, Look, most people are average, right? I mean definitionally most people are average. If you're average and you're living in a distressed community, your outcomes are going to look like most people's in the community. If you're average and you're growing up in Bethesda, and it's a very well-off community, the average kid's going to be well-off. And so I would say, "Look, I'm not asking you to answer this question, because I don't want to have a debate, but I know, I *know* that when you go home you think that if your kids were being raised in the environment that my kids are being raised in under the exact same circumstances, you really believe that your kids would do better. I know you believe that. And I know you believe that if my kids came and lived in your community under exactly the same circumstances as your kids that they wouldn't do as well as your kids. You believe that. And why wouldn't you? That's the whole narrative that we're taught. But you're wrong, you're just wrong. They would do, on average, exactly the same. Exactly the same." I was trying to frame things in ways people could grasp, and to really not be judgmental about their predispositions or prejudices or whatever anybody wants to call it. But just point them out: Your kid's got it made. These kids don't. So if you want to have mandatory minimums and three strikes and whatever, you can do that. But it's a cowardly thing to do, because it does nothing to address *why* these kids' average is so much lower than your kids' average.

Look, having entered that world when I went to college, those people work hard, too. When I was at Yale, I mean, those kids worked their tails off – too hard, really, they drove themselves too hard. And it's the same now that we're all in the workforce. So I would never suggest that people who live in these big houses had it handed to them. But I think these kids [the Dreamers] should have the opportunity to do that, too. That's all I'm saying. But by and large, they don't have that opportunity.

We could be so much better off as a country if we didn't wage war against each other – and especially against people who have the profile that my students have. It's a *waste* – for everyone.

So the notion that Eugene Lang had, in retrospect, was pretty naïve. You know, that I [can] just have my phone available, or I [can] walk through the halls giving pep talks

The notion that Eugene Lang had, in retrospect, was pretty naïve ... deep in the subconscious it assumes that what these communities are missing is some cheerleader telling them to be the best they can be. And that's not it at all. They're missing real stuff that they have in other communities. **In order for them to be successful, you've got to give them the things that you needed to be successful.**

to kids, and that that's going to make a dramatic difference in their lives. It can make a difference for some, for sure, but you need a lot more than that. And the problem with that way of thinking is that deep in the subconscious, it assumes that what these communities are missing is some cheerleader telling them to be the best they can be. And that's really not it. That's not it at all. They're missing real stuff that they have in other communities. And that's what you need to produce. In order for them to be successful, you've got to give them the things that *you* needed to be successful – *that's* it, right? And if they don't have it, like friggin' safety or access to a goddamn doctor if they get sick. And if you don't know that and you're in a position to create policy, you're going to create bad policy.

Had we known then what we know now, we'd have done some things differently. But we did the best we could at the time with what we knew. Like, we would not have had our program in Kramer Junior High School, where I'm trying to keep a kid from dying and I'm seeing a kid shot and there's just chaos; you can't even teach because there are fights in the hall, or just everybody in the hall making noise when you're trying to teach. There's no control. And again, then our kids, they have to be tough. They've got to wear their armor. I was trying to get kids to graduate and go to college. That was my biggest goal. The aspirations of the students may have been quite different. I mean, frankly, some of those kids really were trying to make it to the next day. If we'd have had our own building, in a church or something in Anacostia, where our kids could have come and been kids and known they were safe and have eaten better food and had a longer day, we could have done way better. Just on that. That would have required more of a commitment from Mr. Bainum, financially. And Mr. Bainum is very wealthy and very magnanimous, and I think, had we come up with that idea early on, he may well have funded that. If we had done that one thing, it would have made a huge difference, huge. But some things become obvious later on that aren't obvious at the time.

I keep in touch now with a good number of our Dreamers, about half of them, and one of the things that has surprised me the most over time is that they just do better and better and better as a group. I don't think any of us could have guessed that. When the kids graduated in '94, the

successes were pretty obvious: A far higher percentage of our kids graduated from high school than the half of the kids who were not selected to participate. I ran those numbers at the end of the program. And ditto, a far higher percentage of kids from our program went to college than the half of the kids in their class who were not in our program. I can say that quantifiably. But I think we felt that it could have gone better. The kids could have graduated from high school at a greater rate, gone to college at a higher rate; their academic skills, as a group, could have been better.

I don't think any of us could have anticipated the lagging effect that the program had, which has only become apparent over time.

I think the kids in our program – what is it now, 24-1/2 years after they were adopted? – are doing much better than their parents. And that's not anecdotal; they just are. And I strongly suggest, [they're doing] much better than that half of the class that was not selected to be in that program. If we want to suggest that some of the outcomes for the kids – I still call them kids – the Dreamers, are as a result of the program – obviously there are a lot of factors. But these kids, overall, are just doing so much better than the adults who lived in the neighborhood when they were growing up that it's hard to not conclude that the program bore some responsibility for that.

One of the things that really stood out to me was maybe 10 years ago or so, I started getting all these invitations from Dreamers to weddings. I was like, *Wow!* Because most of their parents weren't married. And I thought, *That's interesting, and that's pretty cool*. Often they were marrying a guy or a gal they had a baby with before and they'd been with since high school, but the point is they were in these stable, what were intended to be lifelong partnerships that resulted in a marriage ceremony. That was not the case with their parents for so many of them. And then, the phone numbers weren't changing every three or four months. And that was what it was like when they were growing up, I mean, I constantly had to scratch out the numbers on the roster. Many of them were at the same jobs for a long time. And I was like, *Well, that's interesting, there's something going on here.*

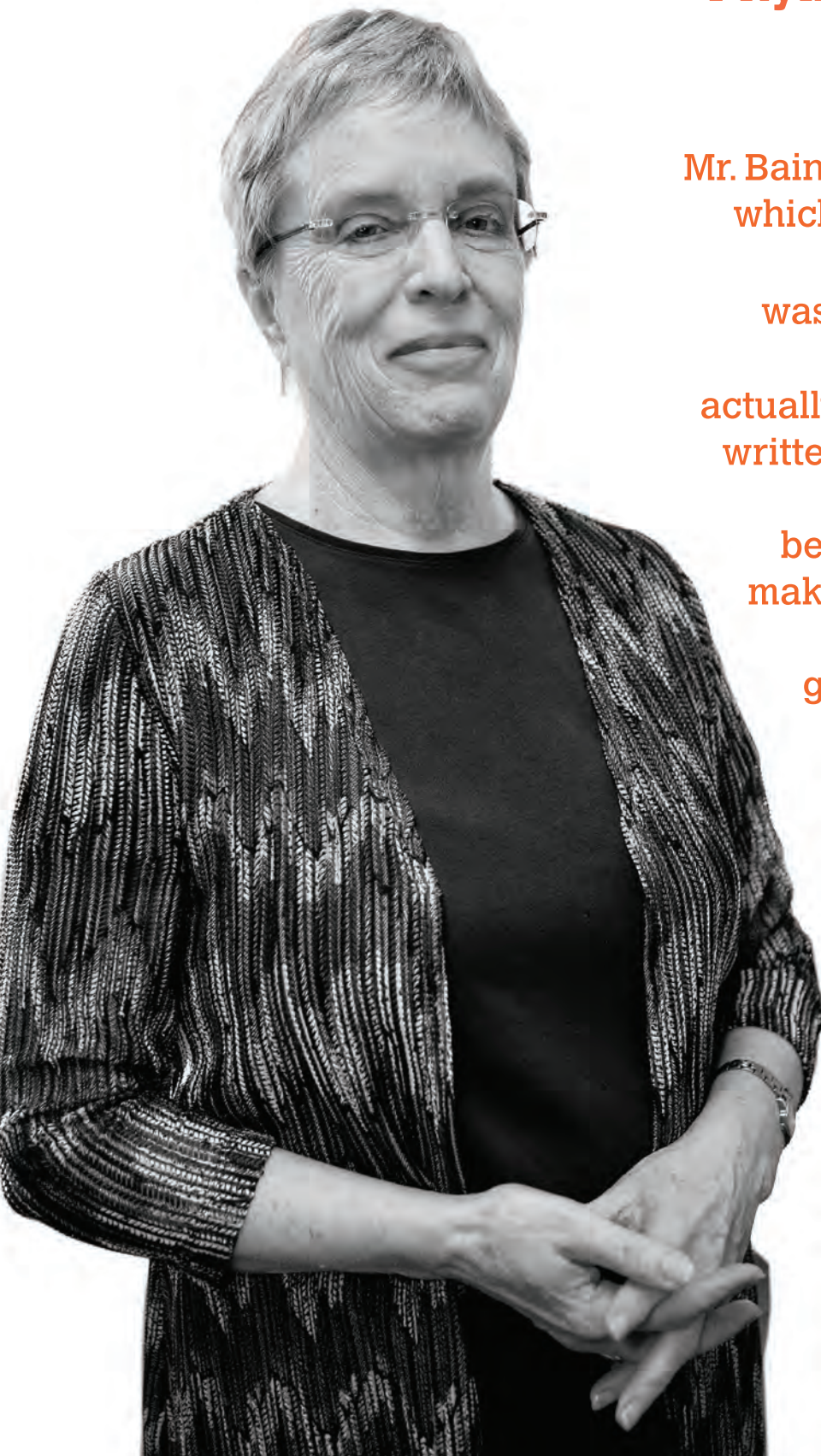
And if my observations are correct, then the beneficial components of this program have accrued over a very long time; they've accrued over 24 years, not just over six years.

›› Dreamer Well-being

›› 42.3% of Dreamers are married*

›› 46% of Dreamer households earn $50,000+/year*

›› 88.5% report their health to be good, to excellent*



Phyllis Rumbarger

(IHAD Program Director)
Executive Director, Retired,
Commonweal Foundation

Mr. Bainum's favorite word, which we just drummed into the kids, was "**perseverance**." Don't give up. And actually, there's been a lot written about that, about how the difference between people who make it and those who don't is instant gratification versus persevering and persistence. You've got to persist.

I Have a Dream was the best job I've ever had. The kids were wonderful. And that kept you going. And most of the school staff and the parents were all great. I was with the kids 5-1/2 years – some of them almost daily for four years. In education, you rarely have that.

The program was very idealistic; there was a high learning curve. Some of the learning curve had to do with how few educational services the kids got in the city. Then how very far behind they were – even those who were in the gifted classes and who were very bright, academically. If you put them with another group in another environment, they wouldn't have been the top. That was one of the biggest learning curves, and one of the biggest wish-I'd-done-differently kind of things. We would have [had] many more services for the top kids. When Steve came, we shifted, and he did a superb job. Because his academic skills were just outstanding and he was young and he could really relate to them.

But I was hired in the initial days to work with the kids academically at the bottom, because that was my specialty. So that's what I did. I taught classes, working with the struggling learners. And sometimes it had nothing to do with a learning disability or an inability to learn; it was they just hadn't been exposed to what you need to know to be successful academically.

The program's expectation was middle-class expectation: You go to school every day, and you work hard, and you do your homework and you have a goal. And we were always – when I say "we," I mean Mr. Bainum, Steve, myself – we were always very clear: You don't have to go to college, but you do need to be able to support yourself. The fact that Mr. Bainum was a plumber, you know. We didn't care *what*, but you need to prepare yourself to do *something*.

Mr. Bainum's favorite word, which we just drummed into the kids, was "perseverance." Don't give up. And actually, there's been a lot written about that, about how the difference between people who make it – and I'm using that term very broadly – and those who don't is instant gratification versus persevering. And persistence. You've got to persist.

So, that was the hardest thing that we were trying to impart, but we were going against most of the culture of the neighborhood. It had nothing to do with race. It wasn't just an academic or a poverty problem or a danger problem. Some of it's the home life, but a lot of it's the neighborhood and the schools. We're talking about the worst of the worst schools; no learning was taking place. Part of the issue, which was really a shock to me because I had never worked in that kind of a neighborhood before, was

Why, at the age of 12 or 13, should you have a dream that you can go to college, when, in another half of your brain, you don't really expect to live past 16?

And that's real. That's because their cousin has died. Their sister has died. And some schools were violent. And so you're not safe. And it's not the culture to stay in school. So, that was one of the hardest things. And almost everything ties to that.

As a side point, the peak in homicides in the District was '91 – that was when we were doing I Have a Dream. So, it was not a good time for the kids to be living there. Now is a piece of cake compared to that.

Crack cocaine had come in, and people didn't know how to handle it. [People] meaning, law enforcement, social workers and of course the school system was even worse than it is now. So we had lots of challenges. But I worked in Southeast for the Bainums for six years, essentially half-way through the Dreamers' seventh grade until they graduated from high school. The staff had to park off-site in the first three years when we were at the junior high school. And you know, the little grandmothers would watch my car. I mean they'd watch everybody's car, not just mine, but nothing ever happened; nothing. And then when I moved in-house for the Foundation in Silver Spring [Maryland], my car was stolen, in a paid, public garage in downtown Silver Spring.

We did a tremendous amount educationally, more than many Dreamer classes did, getting in tutors and then helping some kids get their select placements, like at Duke Ellington School for the Arts for high school, and we had one girl who had a full ride to Holton. She got up every day, [and] she left deep Southeast. And she graduated from Holton on time. Somebody had to bring her to an interview. Steve was really good at all of that. Steve worked extremely well with the very bright girls. They didn't need me. They had mothers and grandmothers who were guiding them. And to talk to parents, you know, and have parents understand the whole piece. And Mr. Bainum also genuinely liked the parents. And I think Mr. Bainum worked very hard to provide services for the kids that had struggled the most. He was a champion of the underdog. He could talk to anybody. I mean, even if they didn't speak the same language, you know, he just wasn't one of those people who could only stay in his little friendship group.

One of the things we thought of too late, at least in our mind, that Mr. Bainum was seriously considering, was finding a place where the kids could live locally that was nurturing and then they would go to local public school. And he even had a couple chosen who could be house parents, and he was looking at property near Eastern [High School]. We were going to target girls. And this would have been the beginning of 10th grade, but it was too late for the ones who were struggling most. So we abandoned that the summer before 10th grade, or maybe the spring. Anyway, then the boarding school idea came up. Mr. Bainum had that in his background, and [the Dreamers] ultimately went to Mr. Bainum's alma mater in Ohio.

And then, of course, the kids who went to boarding school for the last few years of high school, that was a huge piece – statistically, personally, financially – of what we did. Ten went for at least one year. Those students did statistically better in social milestones as well as academically. Now, we didn't have standardized test scores to compare, but we compared pregnancies, we compared incarcerations, we compared who had been killed. All of them who were there their senior year graduated, so it was 100% graduation if they were there their senior year.

I think something like six were there their senior year. Only one of the 10 did not graduate from high school. He was among the missing at that point.

I could give you all kinds of wonderful stories about wonderful things that happened and negative things that happened. But in reality, it's the day-to-day sloshing through the woods.

It turned out, I was more the mother figure kind of thing – you know, I'm white and live in the suburbs. I did more with the guys, particularly the guys who needed the extra academic help, because I was with them all the time. I did a *lot* of bringing the kids to my environment – and I was treated better in Anacostia than they were treated here. And they spent the night here, and we have farmland in Pennsylvania, and I'd take them up there. You know, we did things like that to show them other things you can do.

But then, it's interesting what they notice, things like one of the girls couldn't believe that I didn't have curtains that covered my windows. Because in their neighborhood, that's what you have. And one of the boys couldn't believe how quiet it was, because they hadn't heard any gunshots since they'd been here. And here I'm worried that they didn't do their math homework ...

Some of the Dreamers had never interacted with a white person who wasn't a police officer or social worker, let alone come out and spend the night at their house and do things like that. And when we had the summer programs at George Washington University (GW), they'd never been, you know, on a college campus; some of them never really got across the river very much in those days. And likewise, every time I would go to Anacostia, I mean, they took care of me. They would tell me which alleys I could drive down, and which carryouts I could go in. Yeah, so it was equally as good for me!

I think that … philosophically, I Have a Dream tried to do too much. I think it's very, very difficult to go from living and functioning in a neighborhood as dysfunctional as much of Anacostia was in those days to all of a sudden, you have a college degree and you're leading this middle-class life. But you know, it's stepping stones, and if [you] can go up one rung, like not having your first child until you're 18, and then having a steady job, like one Dreamer, he's a master plumber, he's bought an apartment building in Anacostia. I'm not saying he's rich, but I'm saying it's stability with dreams and goals. He was able to jump up, you know. But he had stable parents. He had motivation.

We were all disappointed there were so many pregnancies. There's no question about that. Because statistically, if you had a child [when you were] young, your chances of graduating are just *phfff*. So that was the biggest disappointment. You know, why didn't you use birth control? Sometimes it was just too hard. Do you know how hard it was, at least 20 years ago, if you're a young woman, living in Anacostia, with very limited money and education, to even get to the right kind of clinic to get protection? I mean, you can't just walk – and you can't hop in a car. You can't take just one bus. It's dreadfully difficult for things like that. Do you know how hard it is to sign up for WIC [Women, Infants and Children Program]? Or how hard it is to get your kids into Head Start?

I tried to help one girl get her kid in Head Start. I thought I'd lose my mind. And I can handle paperwork. It's just … very difficult. And, there were a lot of kids who were in the street trade, which is essentially running drugs. And they were recruited far before we even met them. That was the way it worked, you know?

In ninth, 10th grade, we poured almost all of our energies into getting them to graduate from high school, or with a GED. We did not pour as much energy into college. I mean, we took them on the college tours, and we did all of that. But the fact that we didn't keep staff people really working at the college level once they got there, a lot of our kids dropped out the first year. I mean, I think then we really thought it was time for them to fly on their own. But that's something I'd change. And as I referred to earlier, I would do much more with the gifted, the top kids. And I would definitely do wrap-around services. I would try to do more internships and more getting people into workforce situations. We did a little of that, but I think that's something that we've learned.

In terms of impact on the Foundation, when Mr. Bainum and I were sitting down, asking are we going to do another I Have a Dream class? We decided no, because we felt there were too many flaws in the program. What we *did* do in that conversation is we said, *Well, then, let's form a boarding school scholarship program.* And that's what we did.

So, in terms of impact on the Foundation, it's just gigantic what the Foundation went on and did for the next 15 years – thousands of kids are affected every year. And that was a direct result of what we had done with the Dreamers.

And the Dreamers I would see, I would say, you know, what you did has impact – because you went to boarding school. You were gutsy enough to go. You persevered enough and were persistent enough to hang in there and graduate. You and your colleagues helped inspire this whole program to be built. And Pathways started with just a few hundred kids. In its height, it had, oh, 2,000 kids a year in boarding school. I mean, we're talking an astronomically big program. All because we tried it with these kids. Huge. Then a few years later, we started another whole program at the Foundation that provided grants and support to help the schools get better. We also started Partners in Learning, which provides after-school tutoring for a gazillion kids in the Washington area every single year. And we started giving more and more – there was always a grants program at Commonweal. But you know, it would be targeted slightly differently because of the I Have a Dream experience. So, if you talk about success, all of that came out of I Have a Dream.

›› High School Graduation Rate

By June 1994, compared to their non-Dreamer peers who had a 27% high school graduation rate, 58% of Dreamers (39 of 67) had graduated high school (25 girls and 14 boys).**

Dreamers

* Indicates data from 2013 Child Trends, (2013). Summary of Survey and Focus Group Findings from the Commonweal Foundation Dreamers Project.
** Indicates data from Rumbarger, P. (1994). "I Have A Dream" Program Report 1988-1994
+ Indicates data from Rumbarger, P. (1994). "I Have A Dream" Program Statistics Report 1994

Shafton Greene

Owner, Shafton Enterprises
Manager, Cheesecake Factory
Dayton, Ohio

I'm the only person not in that Dreamer photo from the first day. But for some reason, I just feel like, I don't know, man, **I feel like *I'm* The Dreamer.** *I'm* the one they made that program for.

For real! Even though I wasn't even in the country when they came up with this. I'm not sure how it all worked out, but one guy, he had dropped out of the program and they needed to fill a space. So, my first day – just off the plane from Trinidad – I was the lucky guy. And it was one of those things that was a once-in-a-lifetime shot, because this program really changed my life. And it wasn't just, oh, finish high school and you go to college, they pay for it, and they leave you alone. They *nurtured* us.

I'd left my whole family to come live with my aunt in D.C. I grew up real poor. My mom has 10 kids, and we weren't in school, we dropped out. But we were always business-minded, you know; my mom used to make pillows to sell and we'd make those little ornaments. We used to go knock on doors and sell them to make money, you know, because it's so embarrassing to have to beg the neighbors for something to eat.

I feel like I was just chosen to be there at that time. I mean, it was a million to one for me to come to America. It was a million to one for me to get into the I Have a Dream program. And I took it, and I soaked up *everything* that they gave me. I'm really blessed to know these people. Mrs. Rumbarger brought us into her house. We went to her cabin. We went on trips. We've seen Mr. Bainum's jet – I got pictures with Mr. Bainum's jet where the Dreamers are just chilling, you know? And we'd go to Mr. Bainum's farm every so often and fish. And the way Mrs. Rumbarger [taught], I'm telling you, it was *amazing*. Because she would break it down, and by the time she's finished with you, you're going to understand. And that's how I teach my kids now.

It's one of those rides that just keeps on going, because there have been a lot of times that I wouldn't have made it without the I Have a Dream program, without Mrs. Rumbarger and her family and Mr. Bumbaugh; I'm so grateful to everybody who played a role. And it's sad to see that other people who are less fortunate than us, that they'll *never* experience this. You know, they'll never camp. They'll never make a fire. They'll never fish, you know? [Not] in the inner city. I wish a lot more people could have more experience, you know, [of] being out of the community. It was one of the things that really saved my life, I think. Because I lived in in the middle of Anacostia. And it was crazy back then, it was so violent. You step on somebody shoes, you know, they'll kill you.

I even got beat up one time at Eastern [High School] and got my jaw broken. I have surgical steel in my face, yeah. And it was a trying moment. It was one of the moments, I'm like, *Okay, it's time to do something*. And after that, I was in Mrs. Rumbarger's class in the basement one time, and [someone from] Wilberforce University, which is up here in Ohio, came in and they said, anybody want to fill out applications, and we'll get back with you. And I said to myself, *The first college that accepts me, I'm outta here.* Well, Wilberforce sent me an acceptance, I was out; *I'm going here*. As a matter of fact, they sent me up here before I even went to

college for their summer program. I think Mrs. Rumbarger brought me to college. I've been up here since then.

I'm a reflector person. I like to sit down, just reflect on my life. And I've been through a lot of good things. And I've been through a lot of bad things. So has everybody. But I'm very fortunate to have been married 18 years. I have four beautiful kids. I'm at a point now where I'm doing okay. I'm not rich. And if I was rich, I would do the same thing. My business is actually full time. I have six guys that work for me, so my business kind of runs itself. Landscaping, snow removal, trees, patios, pavers, blacktop and excavation. And I'm also a kitchen manager at the Cheesecake Factory. I also created a landscaping program for ex-offenders coming out so they can be self-sufficient. So now, I'm working my business and my job, and I've been working for six years on creating a nonprofit organization called Pebble in a Pond, to help more at-risk people. It's going to be one pebble, my group, making a big wave – changing people's lives. I want to help a lot of people, a lot of kids.

Because if it wasn't for the I Have a Dream program – I'm not saying I would have never gone to college. I'm not saying I would have never done this. But it had a big impact on my life. It seems like that's what made me almost the person I am today. They were family to me. It wasn't just a teacher. It wasn't just a mentor. It wasn't just a person to feed you or give you money. They were *family*. I love Mrs. Rumbarger like a mom. I love Mr. Rumbarger like a dad; they took me into their home. It just made a difference in everything that people *cared*. You know, someone cared to say, "Hey, let me start this program." So, I thank him so much. **Mr. Bainum gave us the dream. And that's what I want to do, too. I want to show my son, my family, that it's not about fancy shoes. It's not about the electronics. It's about people. Helping people.**

And when I'm standing in front of God and Mama at the gate, He ain't even got to read it. He says, "Child, because of what you did, come in."

They **nurtured** us ... It wasn't just a teacher. It wasn't just a mentor. It wasn't just a person to feed you or give you money. They were **family**.

›› **Postsecondary Plans**

After their June 1994 high school graduation, 26 of 67 Dreamers (39%) enrolled and entered college, and 10 of 67 (15%) worked and/or attended trade school.**

Monique McDavid Zaragoza

Public Defender, Los Angeles County
Long Beach, CA

As Dreamers, we did a lot of trips and excursions, just to give people more exposure to different things. And I remember there was also *another* Dreamer group that was the same grade, and we would all meet up. Those were fun times. They gave us SAT prep classes for those students applying to college – and college tours. They were always open and available,

encouraging you to kind of get outside your comfort zone and do something different.

I want to say I was always focused on the end goal, but, you know, for me, there were periods of time where anything could have happened differently. So, looking back on it, probably what I would tell another student coming up is just to try to take advantage of every resource and opportunity that's presented. You know, accept all blessings. Because you never know what that resource will provide for you later, and you're not in a position as a teenager to really fully know the extent [of it].

For me personally, probably the biggest benefit, the biggest resource, has always been Mr. Bumbaugh. I could always call him or contact him. He helped me when I was applying for law school. He helped me when I was looking for a summer job after my first year in law school. And it was Mr. Bumbaugh who introduced me to his friend who was working at a public defender service, so I did a summer there. And now I work for the Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office. So, he's always been a great reference – still is. For me, that's been a huge benefit. And I'm quite sure some of the other Dreamers may say that for them, Mrs. Rumbarger has been that person. It's been truly beneficial to still have this one person, this constant being, who's been there and has seen your transition from 12, 13 years old to now, you know? They know the struggle. They know where you were to where you are now.

›› Employment

Of Dreamers surveyed, 96% are employed:

›› 73.1% full time

›› 15.4% part time with more than one job

›› 7.7% part time with one job*

Domonique (Alford) Jenkins

Teacher and YMCA Instructor
Laurel, Maryland

> I really think that the I Have a Dream program saved my life. The words "If you graduate from high school, he will pay for college" – that was **hope**.

Because if it wasn't for that goal for me, I wouldn't be where I am now. I wouldn't have graduated from high school, because I wouldn't have cared. My mom couldn't afford to send me to college. And God only knows, after she started using [drugs], that dream really went out the window. Then here's this tall white man that doesn't know me, but all of a sudden he's going to pay for me and 66 others to go to school. That's a lot of people and a lot of money. But I don't think Mr. Bainum saw us like "these poor little …" you know. Not at all. I mean, I'm sure he had a love for us like we were a part of him and his own. He was heaven-sent.

I won't say, necessarily, I wanted it more than anyone else – because I'm sure everyone else wanted to go to college, get a good job, start a family – but I wanted out. I made good grades; I was a smart kid. I just had a crappy home life. My parents started using crack when I was 11. My sister started first; she was pregnant with my niece. I mean, every day coming home, someone's getting high. Surrounded by gunshots and drugs and violence and sex that I shouldn't have been seeing. I mean, I could look at a gun then and tell you how many rounds it had. And I think they really felt for me, Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh. They were my advocates. *Look, this kid needs help.*

When I finished Hart Junior High – because I had left Kramer – I was like, *I'm not going to Ballou*. Hart was the feeder school for Ballou, and at that time, it [Ballou] was crazy. All of the girls were pregnant. The boys were getting shot over coats, tennis shoes – drug dealers. I just didn't need that environment, knowing that I had a I Have a Dream scholarship on the line. So I took the PSAT, and I was able to get into the Edmund Burke School. Mr. Bainum paid for me to go to private school.

But that October, I was admitted to the hospital, DC General, with an itchy hive rash and pains in my legs. They kind of looked at me like, *You're not going to be able to go home*. I was in the hospital for 11 days. It was what the doctor suspected: I had lupus. After I got out, I went back to Burke, and I tried to keep up. I'd missed two weeks of school. Even though I had friends, they were busy doing piano lessons, guitar lessons, soccer, you name it. No one brought me work. Here I am, the little girl from Southeast. And it was just devastating for me, because it was already difficult from the start. I was already behind. So I'm trying to play catch-up, and it was just too much.

My last official day at Edmund Burke was my birthday, March 5. Mr. Bumbaugh helped me leave Burke and enroll at Ballou. It didn't feel comfortable. I played hooky a lot, because I was bored. What they were doing in March, April, I did in October. So, it wasn't a challenge. I mean, I would go every day, but I would just leave at lunch, you know, go get my hair done, go get my nails done. At the time I was 16; my boyfriend was 24. There were parts of him that were bad for me. But he did look out for me. He made sure that no one bothered me. He made sure that my niece and I had meals. I didn't have to want for anything, because he would have made sure I had it.

Mr. Bumbaugh would come by the school or come by my house and see how I was doing, but my parents, they didn't care; they were on drugs at that time. So, it wasn't a constant, everyday presence of someone to say, "Oh, you skipped school today? You're in trouble." I mean, they were loving parents. They just had a really bad way of showing it!

The plan was for me to only go to Ballou to finish the school year and then to go to Mount Vernon in the fall. So I told my parents, "I'm going to Ohio." Dad was really strict, he was like, "No, you're not." *Hmm, watch.* I packed my stuff. Every day something else was gone until I got everything that I cared about that I could take – and Mrs. Rumbarger came and got the boxes and shipped them to Ohio. Then I was like, "I'm leaving. This is going to be good for me. You guys do you, I'm going to do me." And, at that point, my parents were like, "Oh, whatever." So I left. I mean, I had no choice. I was taking care of myself, basically, anyway.

It was hard, because I didn't want to leave my niece behind. She was four. But it was put to me that in order to help her, you have to help *you* first. And that's a hard lesson for many people – caregivers – to learn; I'm still trying to learn it! Looking back on it, Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh and my mentor, I think they triple-teamed me. You know, *This would be really good for you*, and *Just think of what you'll be able to accomplish if you do.* The choice ultimately was my own. But yeah, it was hard; I cried all the time, *all the time*. And the only thing that kept me going was, *I got to do this for my niece. I got to make it so she can make it.*

I did two years at Mount Vernon Academy. It was quite an experience – big adjustment. Some of the kids thought we got special treatment. We didn't – but we were unique. Because we were like brothers and sisters. When we were sad or homesick, we were there for one another. I mean, we were all we had while we were there. When we were looking for colleges, Mrs. Rumbarger rented a van and took us all on a college tour trip. It was awesome. My top choice was Baldwin-Wallace. And I got my acceptance letter around the time of my birthday. I was so elated. So, that fall, Mrs. Rumbarger drove me to Baldwin-Wallace. kissed me goodbye and told me, "Have a great year." In my blue dress with my white collar. And then **when I graduated, in June of '98, my mentor came, Mrs. Rumbarger came, and my mom. It was awesome. The three most important women, and they were so proud of me. I had a diploma, finally, and it said "college."**

A lot of what I went through has definitely governed how I run my life now. I've made sure that my kids understand the importance of school. That's a non-negotiable. Good grades are a non-negotiable. No C's in this house. I make sure that they are world-cultured. You do what you have to do to make sure your children succeed. Now, they don't have the mentors that I had. They don't have Mr. Bainum, they don't have Mrs. Rumbarger. Well, they do, kind of, sort of. My name for her is "Mom Two." And for my kids, she's like "Grandma Two." She took a special interest in me. And I loved her right back for it. Mr. Bumbaugh, the same thing.

I think without the entities that I had – I Have a Dream, Katherine Klein – I wouldn't have gone to school. I would have never gone

to Edmund Burke, which would have not exposed me to that college preparatory life, to say, when I got to Ballou, *Oh, this isn't normal, I got to get out of here.* To then go to Mt. Vernon and still want more and go forward. It provided me with hope. And the opportunities through that hope just kept me holding on, that it's going to get better, it's going to get better, it's going to get better. Without that, I could have had a child really young. I could have been with the boyfriend still, who was selling drugs. Maybe even murdered, just because I was with him. I mean, he was tortured and killed. May his soul rest in peace. All those things could have happened to me.

So even though I think, in my heart of hearts, my story is unique, deep down it really isn't. We all had our own reasons that we needed to get away from whatever situation. Maybe someone's mom was an alcoholic. During that time, drugs were heavy. The crack epidemic was *crazy.* Many of us didn't have a mom. Many of us didn't have a dad. And even if Mom and Dad were physically there, half the time they weren't there mentally. Stepping over drug addicts in your home, or having to walk really fast past someone because you're afraid that they might snatch you up and rape you.

Granted, the program can't do it all, and no, you can't save them all. Me, I'd like to think you can. But you do what you can. I think some of the other Dreamers may have had the chances I had if they had a mentor like mine, who cared and who was dedicated to stick it out. I mean, she's been one of the ones within that circle who made sure I had clothes. Who made sure I had food. She paid for my wedding. She's been like a mom. Or if they had more attention or more of a bond or connection with Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh. Some individual to care enough to make sure that they went to school, to make sure that they celebrated the little things. Some type of force to let them know that they're not in it alone.

Even though I think, in my heart of hearts, my story is unique, deep down it really isn't. We all had our own reasons that we needed to get away from whatever situation ... And that hope just kept me holding on, that it's going to get better, it's going to get better, it's going to get better.

›› Boarding School

In 1991, 10 Dreamers enrolled in Mount Vernon Academy (MVA). By June 1994, 9 of 10 graduated high school – seven from MVA, two from D.C. public schools; six (60%) had plans to attend college.+

Murray Sumes

Pharmacy Technician
Washington, D.C.

Kramer wasn't an easy school to go to. Just the level of **violence** ...

I can remember a girl stabbed a boy in the cafeteria, in front of everybody. Just missed his spine and heart by a few inches. Actually, the young lady who did the stabbing was a Dreamer. The boy said something about [how] he was going to rape her in an alley or something. Another young man was shot three times on the playground during recess. Apparently, he was dealing drugs, and I guess they came to collect; when he didn't have the money, he got shot. At one point during the year, they closed down half the school because they were doing some remodeling for the science labs; a young lady got raped in this closed-off part of the school.

Back then it was during, I guess you can say, the height of the District's notorious murder capital theme and the drug epidemic. A lot of kids in the school came from really rough neighborhoods. My neighborhood was pretty bad – shootings every night; I've been shot at, I've seen dead bodies in the street from shootings. But compared to the neighborhoods that some of the other Dreamers came from, it was a walk in the park. I didn't live in the notorious projects [such as] Butler's Garden, Barry Farms. And if nobody catches these kids early, they kind of get desensitized to it, you know; they think it's the norm. So a lot of the kids in the school either were selling drugs or their parents were on drugs. I think, as a whole, the student population had more issues than one school should have, as far as mentally. With that being said, my issues didn't necessarily come from the neighborhood; mine were more personal home issues. Which is probably why I stayed out in the neighborhood: to stay away from home. For me, the I Have a Dream program was truly a blessing. It kind of gave me some type of stability. Mr. Bumbaugh and Mrs. Rumbarger, they gave you an outlet, a place to go and speak your mind, get things off your chest. And gave good, solid, sound advice.

We were all grouped together, able to bond and form these relationships. So even if things felt overwhelming, you knew you could look to your left or your right and have some type of **support system** right there. Just the **camaraderie** of being able to know that you belong to something – and it was a *positive* something, you know?

I only wish that I could have taken full advantage of it, the way I should have. I was young; back then you never really thought about your future. If I knew back then what I know now, it would be a whole lot different.

But I wouldn't change the experience; being in the I Have a Dream program was definitely fun and rewarding. They gave us the opportunity to experience a lot of different things that ordinarily, coming from where we came from, we wouldn't have had a chance to. And I'm grateful for that. My favorite memory of the program was going to New York. It just felt good being out of D.C., just walking down the street in New York, seeing the different sights, and even though it's still, you know, the United States of America, the East Coast, it was a whole different culture. We saw Arabs,

Ethiopians, Africans, and you know, we're walking into different stores, electronics, clothing, and it was just different. We didn't have a lot of stores around here. We didn't have bodegas. The hustle and bustle of New York; it was fast-paced, you know, people really do run over you if you're not moving fast! And we went to see "The Lion King," which was really nice. And we went to Busch Gardens in New Jersey on the way back. That trip was one of my fondest moments.

Being in the program gave me a different perspective on the world itself.

Where I came from, you didn't see a lot of white people. And the stories that you heard about white people were not always positive. And then I met Mrs. Rumbarger. Loved her to death. I couldn't imagine any white lady – any lady, for that fact, taking a bunch of young adolescent men to her own personal house and having a sleepover and cooking – cooking brownies and eating pizza. Mrs. Rumbarger was very caring, very open, affectionate. But she was – I'm not going to say strict, but she was always encouraging us to do our best. She was always there to lend a helping hand, whether it was school, personal or what have you. If there was a way for her to help you, she would genuinely try.

It was eye-opening as to basically, never judge a book by its cover; learn your own lessons, interact with different people. Just take a chance.

And Mr. Steve Bumbaugh: tremendous man. He used to take a group of guys, and we would go up to GW or go play basketball with his buddies, and we'd go hang out at his house. In essence, it got us out of the neighborhood, it got us away from a bad environment. It gave us a different perspective on life in general. When he took us to Georgetown, I remember little things, like we had a gyro. That was the first time I ever had a gyro. Never knew what it was. Never heard of it. Certainly had never thought of eating goat meat. People say, "Well, you went to Georgetown – that's D.C." Whatever. For *me*, it was a big experience. Again, it was a different perspective – from a different source that looked like me. Because where *we* came from, it wasn't a lot of white people. Where we came from, it wasn't a lot of successful black men. Certainly not successful black men who went to the university and things of that nature that Mr. Bumbaugh came from. The way he spoke, the way he carried himself, the words he used. But he was still a black man.

I remember 10th-grade year was perfect. That summer before getting to 10th grade, Mrs. Rumbarger had taken a group of guys to the Giant headquarters, out there in Maryland, off of Martin Luther King Highway. And we got summer jobs working at Giant. The summer ended. Giant kept me. So, for that whole 10th-grade year, I worked and went to school. I was on the baseball team. I tried out for the football team. Actually, in my whole formative years of schooling, that was my best year ever.

And for whatever reason, 11th-grade year, I got completely off track. I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. And I ended up getting locked up. So, I didn't get to graduate from Eastern [High School]. It was just four months, but Eastern would not let me back in. After trying to get back in, they finally told me I had to go to my neighborhood school, which was Anacostia

Senior High School. I did *not* want to go to Anacostia. Kramer was rough, but Anacostia was worse. I didn't want to be in that environment, so I said, *Nah, I'll just go ahead and get my GED*. And again, Mrs. Rumbarger helped me with that. She helped me find a GED testing place. I went and took the test, and I passed.

Mrs. Rumbarger could have washed her hands of me. Because I was 18, and I had basically sabotaged my own future. But true to form, she stuck with me.

And I went to UDC [University of the District of Columbia]. She helped me get to UDC. The I Have a Dream program paid for that. She helped me get into PG [Prince George's] Community College. A lot of things she did for me after I had my run-in with the law. I think it was just purely her being the person that she was. Because I think a lot of people would have said, you know, I have other people to worry about. I can't worry about you. And they would have moved on. And she didn't do that. She stayed through it, thick and thin. And I will always be appreciative for that.

I have another favorite memory, and again, this is a testament to Mrs. Rumbarger. She thought it would be great for me to be a mentor. She was running a similar program in Baltimore, and when I got out and was having a hard time finding a job, she employed me as a mentor. Now, I had to get to Baltimore on my own, so on some days I would drive my father's car when he didn't have to go to work. He was a D.C. paramedic. Other days I would get on the MARC train. And again, out of my comfort zone, riding the MARC train, learning the Metro system in Baltimore just to get to the site. At the time I was 19, maybe 20, and I'm talking to these little kids, and we're taking the kids on trips around Baltimore – that made me want to be a social worker. Or do something along the lines of helping kids. For me, just being able to go down there and interact with these kids, and after the trouble that I'd been in, she didn't have to extend that to me. And she did. She always worked with me. And it probably would be the same today. I think that's who she always was and who she'll always be.

So, being in the program, meeting Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh, really made a difference. And Mr. Bainum. I've spoken to Mr. Bainum on a few occasions. And the times that I've spoken to him or heard him speak to us, it was always a positive message. He was always engaging, always friendly. Open. This is a man who was a businessman, but he took time to put an investment in, at the time, an unknown commodity. It probably was a risk. But he did it anyway. It gave people an opportunity, as far as I'm concerned, in the lower-class part of D.C. to get a chance to go to college and get an education. Some of us took advantage of that. Some of us did not. I only wish that I really took advantage of the whole situation.

I didn't feel like I got the proper guidance, the proper motivation, at home. But I can't really put it all on my parents or what they did or didn't do. I'm a firm believer that once you get to a certain age and you're able to think and do things for yourself, you can't really dwell on what didn't happen. Or what did happen when you were young. But at the same time, what happened to me had a profound effect on how I saw things and

how I went about life. I had issues that played a part in why I wasn't as focused as I should have been. Why I wasn't as motivated as I should have been. Nobody knew, um, my personal plight at that time. I think if I would have been more forthcoming and open about the things that I went through, if Mrs. Rumbarger had the full story of my background, I think she definitely could have helped. But as a young man, I didn't want to seem like I was weak, or vulnerable or anything like that. So I kept it to myself. And I kind of like acted out more than anything else. If I had a chance to do it all over again, I think that I would have spoken up.

But actually, last year, I finally did finish Fortis College [to be a] pharmacy technician. So, at 37, I finally got motivated. As they say, it's never too late. I'm proud of myself for that. I just wish I would have done it earlier. Because there's no telling where I would be right now had I started earlier.

My personal upbringing and I Have a Dream and, more importantly, me missing out on going to a college for four years and having it paid for has a **profound effect on how I raise my kids**, it absolutely does. I tell my kids all the time, you don't want to do what I did. I tell little cousins, little nephews, kids out in the street – I will talk to anybody's child – and I explain to them a little bit of what I've been through and just try to get them to understand: You don't want to wait until later in life. You don't want to struggle like I did. You don't want to struggle like I am struggling. You don't want to sit there and let opportunity pass you by without taking advantage of it. That's one of the things that I try to stress to my kids: Opportunities are always going to come; it's what you do to take advantage of them. You may not even realize that it's an opportunity, but if you're always doing what you're supposed to be doing, when that opportunity comes you're going to be able to seize that moment. Always be looking to seize a moment.

Being in the I Have a Dream program steered me in a more **positive direction.** I think that without the summer programs, without the trips that we took throughout the school year, it would have just left more time for some of us just to be more out in the street hanging with the wrong element. The path that I was heading down, I wouldn't be here today, or I would be in jail. I don't think that I would have been a productive part of society.

›› Court Involvement

10 of 67 (15%) of Dreamers had been and/or were involved in the courts as of the summer of 1994: two (5%) girls and eight (31%) boys.+

Corey Fowler

Retail Sales Associate
Washington, D.C.

The program really was excellent. It helped a lot as far as knowledge and learning, but also extra activities to keep us out of trouble, to keep our minds stimulated, instead of leaving school, going home and getting in trouble. Or just staying in the house until your parents got off from work.
I really enjoyed being around everybody, including Ms. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh. They were there to help us to become a better man or a better woman, and that's what they did. And I appreciate it. Students now, they'll never experience what I experienced, and it's sad; having Christmas parties, all the food, all the activities, horseback riding and swimming at the farm. Just taking our mind off of school and just enjoying the atmosphere. It was wonderful!

If I had a chance to turn back the hands of time, I would. Because – how can I choose my words? – for an older man and a white man to pay 67 black kids' way to college – that's a blessing in itself. You'd never get that again. Unfortunately, when I came out of high school, I didn't take that chance. Unfortunately, Corey Fowler didn't go. I said, *I'm not going to college. I want to work*. And in 2013, I wish I had! Because it would have helped me out now. I wouldn't be doing the things that I'm doing now to try to make a living. Mr. Bumbaugh and Mrs. Rumbarger, they were encouraging; both of them played a good role. But it was up to me to take that advice. And sometimes I do beat myself up for it because I should've taken that chance.

›› Graduation Rates Today

Of Dreamers surveyed, 88.5% earned their high school diploma, 11.5% their GED.*

Martece (Gooden) Yates

Board Relations Specialist, National Center for Assisted Living, and Nursing Student
Washington, D.C.

I remember this day like it was yesterday. It was in the summer, and we got a knock on our door. We lived in some condos in Southeast at the time. It was this man in a suit, Mr. Williams, telling my mom that I was selected to be a part of this program. We were *flabbergasted*. We did not believe him initially. He told us that the criteria was the first year you had to go to Kramer – Kramer was *not* the best school at the time. Kramer did not have the reputation of being a safe school, let alone a good junior high school. And if you had decent grades, then why would you go there? I probably would have gone to one of the out-of-bounds schools, like Deal, further uptown, that had a better reputation. But when you have someone saying that you're going to get a full ride anywhere you are accepted. Sure, I'll go to Kramer; it was a no-brainer. I always had aspirations to go to college; it was totally expected of me. I mean, I was that kid who ran around Southeast with a Harvard jersey. So, it was perfect. I remember my mom and I going around just telling *everybody, everybody* about the situation. It was amazing. It gives me the chills now!

When I think about it, I mean, our ZIP code may have designated us as being impoverished, but at home, you know, I always had this family orientation. We had food. We had lights – you know, we had those things. It wasn't like our circumstances were despair. But when it came to college, I would have been first generation. So, it was just amazing that someone who was rich wanted to do this with their money.

It gave me my first sense of charity. Church was one thing, but it's a very different type of charity, you know? You're committed to it in a different way versus this was someone who was just going to help people that he didn't even *know*.

We were all together at Kramer, in specific homerooms. And we had all kinds of different opportunities, places we would see. It was great, and it was just unbelievable having Mr. Bumbaugh and Mrs. Rumbarger there to assist you with whatever you needed, to kind of be that advocate for you that didn't have to be your mom or your dad. I was probably closer to Mr. Bumbaugh. I mean, he was amazing. He was always encouraging and helpful, and he was smart, you know? I'm not saying we didn't know smart people, but he had a degree.

Another great thing about the program was in **my ninth-grade year, I was one of the ones selected to work at ManorCare. And it really got my interest in the professional arena.** Working there didn't seem like your typical summer youth employment job where you got this whole big pile of data entry stuff that had sat on someone's desk. Mr. Bainum really allowed us to move around in different departments. I was able to go into his employee relations department, to the hotel division, just all over the company.

And you got to go visit him in his office and see his assistant, Judy, and just say hi. There was the notion, *These are my Dreamers. Make sure you treat them well. And get to know them.* I got to meet the most amazing people. I mean, I still have relationships today with people that I used to work with or work for at ManorCare. So I did that every summer. It was so great that I ended up working for him even after I graduated. So, I was at ManorCare from ninth grade, in the summers, through 12th, and then all the way up until '97, when I started my current job. It was just an amazing program.

But what ended up happening for me is, unfortunately, **my mother became addicted to drugs – to crack cocaine and cocaine. And my world just fell apart.** I went from being this kid who had this huge support group and everything to, *Oh, my gosh, what is going on here*? I mean, to come home and your phone'd be cut off. Or just wonder, you know, *Where's the car?*

Tenth grade was the start of it. And so, at the time, from being embarrassed to not really feeling like I had someone to share that information with, I just didn't know what to do. Around 11th and 12th grade is when it was *rock bottom*. Thank God I had my sister. It was my sister and I, and we had to survive. My stepfather was kind of back and forth between our house and another house. And he was getting high as well. So, it just was not a good situation. It was like my sister and I turned into the parents, and my mother was the child. We had to be very sneaky with things, like people who

experienced addiction know. Hiding my money. In my bra. But it wasn't like anybody had to say, "Okay, make sure you go to school. Make sure you do your homework." Those things I still did. But it was such a difficult time, and I just wish I had someone to talk to or someone who could say, "It's going to be okay. Don't worry. You can do this."

I probably *did* have that close of a relationship with Mr. Bumbaugh. But I just couldn't – **it was just too embarrassing to share with anyone.** Also, at the that time I felt I had an image to maintain: I was popular, I was a good dresser, you know, all those typical little high school childish kinds of things, those superlatives, those titles: Captain of the Majorettes. I was one of those kids who, from the outside looking in, [was] *Oh, Martece is fine. I mean, she makes good grades. She comes from a nice family; they have a home. Everything is great.* I feel like I should have said something. If it was today, I would probably shout it from the rafters. But at the time, I don't know if – in a 15-, 16-, 17-year-old mindset – if I could have done that without some assistance. Without someone practically pulling it out [of me].

And once I got to 12th grade, things were really bad. It was just survival. My grades definitely slipped. I was not the honor student that I'd been. And even though I had applied to schools, I felt like, if I left, my mother was going to die. And then also, to think about *Oh, my gosh, if I go away to school, how am I going to eat?* Like, there was no notion – without having family who had ever been to college – that, oh, you're on a meal plan, you don't have to worry about that. I had an aunt who just kept saying, "You gotta do it. You gotta go." And I was, like, "But I can't. She'll OD [overdose] if I do." I would never forgive myself if I did that. So, I ended up going to UDC. But when I started, I was pregnant with my son, and I did not continue. That was really difficult, feeling like, yes, I want to go school; however, I'm a parent now. And my son's father, who's now my husband, we're still married, still together, we got a place together and we raised a kid. It was just what had to be done at that time. Beforehand, Mr. Bumbaugh or Mrs. Rumbarger, would have been like, "Okay, we know Martece is going to go on." I was expected to go, and I really thought I could get there. So that took some time for me to absorb or accept.

There's not much in my life that I think I would change, but that's the one thing – and it's not even just because of the money *per se*. It's just that it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And to just come to terms with letting that opportunity get away ... If I could get a do-over, that is the one thing I'd probably do over.

There have been times when I've sat awake at night just wondering, *Oh my gosh, so out of the 67 of us, how many really did it, really took it all the way through and really benefited from the program?* I'm not sure why some of the others didn't. I think some did go to college and just didn't stay or had situations like me, where they became parents. As adults, nobody's really embarrassed to talk about it now, so come to find out, many of us were going through the same situations at home. But we just never talked about it. We *never* talked about it. Because again, at that time, it was ... *embarrassing*. Like you were *scum*; no one saw addiction as a disease then. It was like, you wouldn't even want to be attached to it.

In retrospect, **I feel like the program could have had someone who had a clinical background to be a counselor or psychologist**, with a little research on what some of these kids may be dealing with. What do kids from this side of town experience? What is it like to have a parent that's addicted to drugs? Or what is it for a kid to be homosexual, and how do you filter through that? Those kinds of social issues. In hindsight, that could probably have strengthened the program. Because I bet with a lot of us, they didn't know. And the ones that they did, maybe those were the kids who had the mentors and things like that, where some extra things were put into place. I think for me, nobody thought I was having a tough time. I masked it very well. But I was a kid dealing with adult responsibilities and adult problems – and I think it would have made a difference for me. I mean, I love my son dearly, but I maybe wouldn't have been a parent at 18.

›› Pregnancies

›› As of 1995, 17 of 38 Dreamer girls (45%) had child(ren).[1]
›› 19 of 21 (90%) girls without children graduated high school, compared to 10 of 17 (59%) girls with children.++

In my office now, I have a picture by an artist, Ernie Barnes, called, "The Graduate." It's of a young African-American boy with his cap and gown on. That's, my focal point, my motivation. I just continue to picture that. Because actually, I've been back in school since fall 2009. I am at Trinity University pursuing my nursing degree. I am a junior now, and just got accepted into the actual nursing program where I can start the clinicals. So I've done all my prerequisites, maintained a 3.7, still working full-time, a mother of two – because I also have a 13-year-old daughter now. My son plays basketball. My daughter does competitive gymnastics. Trying to juggle all of that, we're a pretty busy family! But hopefully, in two years, I can be walking across that stage at graduation – "*Martece Yates, BS in ...*" I'm excited about it; I can't wait. Of course, I've taken the tougher road, but it's all about completing it at the end, and then all the people that I get to thank afterward.

I want to thank Mr. Bainum and his family for everything they have done, as well as Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh. Just thank them for *everything* they have absolutely done. Just seeing them and wanting to do better. Them showing us a different way. Because of them, we were able to see things in a different light. And all those things have definitely influenced every part of my life – what I plan to do, even with being a parent and facilitating what I want for my kids, exposing them to different things. And with them, college is not a question. You will be disowned first without it. Now we're starting to look at the pedigree of the degree. My husband and I, we will move hell and high water to do whatever it is we need to do for them. Really, at the end of the day, I don't have much about my life to complain about. Despite those things I went through, I feel like I made it. I feel like I have a lot to be proud about. I'm so grateful for the program.

These experiences will just live with me forever, and I want to help someone like I was helped.

1 Note: The program lost track of three of the original 41 girls. They are not included in this count.

Antwan Green

Owner, ASG Trucking
Essex, Maryland

I loved the program. It changed my life. I wish that everybody could experience it. It's hard to put in words. And even though I haven't spoken to people in a very long time, this part of my life is special. **In those crucial years, we really had somebody looking out for us.** And the promise of going to college was great – and they didn't just say that, you know? They were involved with us day after day after day.

At Kramer, we had classes with the general population, but Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh kind of kept us together, so we were doing a lot of activities together as the Dreamers. We felt like we were a little different from the rest. I mean, because we had each other. We were blessed. It was a lot of extra stuff Mr. Bumbaugh and Mrs. Rumbarger did. Like studying with us – extra teaching, behind the scenes, a lot of extra hours helping us out and making sure we got it. It taught me how to study, to research. And boarding school taught me how to take advantage of the time.

I was one of the first ones who went to MVA, Mt. Vernon Academy. So, we went to an environment where academics was everything, and everybody strived hard to make the good grades. Coming from where I came from, it wasn't important, so I didn't take it that serious. But I remember we were sitting in an awards ceremony there for people getting honor roll. And one of the other students, he was a kid from the [local] area, looked [at us] – it was me, D'Angelo and a couple of other Dreamers that were there – and said, "Yeah, you guys'll never be up there." I was, like, *What? Okay, I'll play.* I turned it on from right there.

The very next semester, I dug in. I went hard. Straight A's. I made A's in every subject, every class. And [the kid] just couldn't believe it. So the next award ceremony, *I* was up there. Like, *In your face*. I had to show him.

Everybody was proud. And actually, when we had a ceremony for the Dreamers, I won all these different plaques. I think I had Outstanding Achievement, Honor Roll and Most Improved. I mean, I was studying nonstop. I gave up basketball. No more playing. Extra credit. I was a completely different student. And that was all because the environment was different.

It was an experience in Ohio; it was different. I went [for] 10th and 11th, and then I think it was Christmas break in 11th that I didn't go back. I don't know; it was a weird time for my family at home, and I had a situation up there about dating. It was like a hay dance or something. It was a young lady there, she was a cheerleader. She was a white cheerleader, and I was African-American, and she asked me to go to the ball. I said okay. I was really popular. She was really

popular. But I mean it was a big stare, big talk. I just felt like it was a lot of tension. Because that town didn't have many African-Americans – it was only us from that school in the *entire* town. It was just so much talk, and I wasn't used to that. I was young – and she asked *me*. But they made a stink about it. It was just getting really hostile toward me. And it was beyond the students – it was administrators. I remember the dean had a conversation with me, like, "I mean, is it really worth going to the dance with her?" He didn't tell me not to; he just was like, "Is it really worth going – *really*?" That was one of the things that made me not so impressed.

After that, I didn't go back. The thought of that 12th-grade year was like, *This is too much. I'm done with this*. At that time, it seemed like years were forever. Like *now*, you want them to slow down. So that was really the reason why I didn't go back. And my mom and my little sister, she's two and a half years younger than me, they were having hard times here, with my mom and her husband. That was another reason. When I talked to my sister, she's crying, it was just, it was so much going on. I felt like I had too much responsibility to my family. And like, I couldn't complain to them about a problem I'm having at the school. They couldn't really relate. It felt like it was just all on my shoulders.

I guess, if Mr. Bumbaugh would have been there, it would have been different. Or **if somebody, you know, on a one-on-one basis, would have been able to talk me through it, I think I would have been okay.** But it got a little crazy for a kid by [himself]. But, hey, whaddya gonna do? So, I decided to come back and try to work or do whatever, help out with the family. I just thought that, okay, I got the tools. I can go anywhere and do what I want to do for a while. I felt like the college part of it was already taken care of, so I didn't have to worry about that, I can make it happen.

When I left Mt. Vernon, I think my Dreamer days were kind of over. I just had to separate. I don't know, I was not really embarrassed, because I made the decision myself, but I just didn't want to face them when I knew I let them down. And I let them down not because I couldn't do it.

They wanted me to come to Eastern [High School], where they had the program, but I was, like, *Ah, it's going to be a whole lot of talk about why I'm not away at school when I should be there.* And while we were gone, a lot of changes happened. Rafiq [a Dreamer] had gotten murdered, we had lost a guy. People were growing up now. I don't know. But that's what it was. **You just think you know everything when you're that young.** I guess I was not trying to be a part of it all. So, I chose to go to Wilson. I broke all ties, and then it just got lost.

I got in a little bit of trouble that 11th grade summer. I caught a charge. They put it on a juvenile charge, so it's not on my record now as an adult. I went to the 12th-grade year and got distracted and just didn't finish up the 12th-grade. After that, I got in a little bit more trouble. I ended up winning that case, beating that case. But the judge made a statement like, "You were in trouble a couple years ago, and then you're back in here. One more time, whether you did it or not, come through *this* courtroom, I'm giving you max time."

When they tell you, "We're going to take this portion of your life" – I mean, is it really worth it?

Nah, not really. I'm not a fool. I took that as a blessing, and I straightened up. "Okay, your Honor, you're right. You're absolutely right." So then I got my job. And I really worked this time. I worked for Coca-Cola for five years or so. And at that time, I just evolved. Started in the warehouse, moved up. Got a CDL, a commercial driver's license, so I was doing a route. And I got another opportunity with the trash company, I got involved with that. Been doing that for 12 years, but I only worked for the company for, like, five. Then I started my own company. I was still working for the company – running two jobs. And then I went on my own in '04 or '05. And from that time on, I've been working for myself.

I think the luxuries and what I've been able to afford and all of that kind of averaged out. But the only thing that I didn't accomplish is becoming that attorney that I wanted to be. And they put a lot of things in place for it to happen – now that I'm an adult, I can look back. They gave me a mentor, Tony Jones. He was an attorney. But just me being on my own – well, I had the support from the Dreamers program and the Foundation – but I was my only support on *this* side to push me through. Like if a parent or somebody else was in my head like, *Just do it, just do it*. With my determination, I would have been off.

I didn't finish the program, but no regrets, because I learned a lot. I wouldn't change anything – well, I would. But it had a great impact. It had a great impact. I wouldn't be as well-rounded without this program. The way I am today is because of those experiences.

Over the years, I wanted to know what happened to Mr. Bainum. He was *so* nice. And his kids, too. I would love it if you could reach out to Mr. Bainum – I just want to thank him. His daughter and son, too. Or if there's anything he needs. Whatever he needs, if I can do anything. If I can just let him know I appreciate everything he did. I just need him to know I appreciate it. Everything that he did.

›› Beyond Tuition

Of Dreamers surveyed, 97% say the program was a source of support to them in ways beyond the tuition promise.*

Even though I didn't take full advantage, I still turned out just fine because of the foundation that they laid.

Even without completing the program, even without the college part of it, the program helped me to succeed. I got enough tools, at the right time in my life, to survive in the world – as a productive member of the world. Not just getting by day to day, but really being a part of it. So, I owe it all to the program, absolutely.

Tamika Anderson

Medical Assistant and Security Guard
Washington, D.C.

I don't know how I got selected for the I Have a Dream program. But we used to have so much fun, our little group. We used to go in these big, fancy buildings – I don't know if they were hotel banquets – and eat this nice food. We were just *loving* it! And then they had trips, camping trips, we went to colleges; we used to go a lot of places. Where I grew up, we didn't do stuff like that, so it was exciting and fun.

Growing up, we lived in a house with my grandmother and all her kids – my aunts and uncles. I can laugh at it now, but … it was rough, it was so rough. I don't wish that on any kid. They were young, my mom and my aunts, when they had us. So, they were still partying, having their friends over to hang out. There was a lot going on at our house.

Sometimes we stayed with Mrs. Rumbarger. She used to come get a few of us, and we used to help her cook. Yes, I remember that. It was fun. It was fun. We really looked up to Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh. Kids really do look up to mentors if they're not getting it at home, you know? My cousin was in the program, too – Tyrone Anderson. Well, we called him Manman. Manman was always with Mrs. Rumbarger. And another cousin, James Taylor, J.J. But you know, he got killed recently. I got to say about 2005 maybe.

I tried so hard to stay in school. I went all the way up to the 11th grade. But, I was hungry. I didn't have money to eat. I needed support.

I was, like, *I got to get a job. I'm old enough now. I can't keep going to school starving.* I didn't have proper clothes to wear; I wanted new clothes on the first day of school, like everybody else. So, I found a job at a fast-food restaurant. And I moved in with my cousin in Maryland, where my job was. And I tried to go to work and do GED at night because the I Have a Dream program told us as long as we graduated, they would fund us for college. And I wanted to go to college. I kept telling myself that I was. The GED class was at Ballou High School. But it was just a long commute back and forth, and, you know, it wasn't safe. And actually I got pregnant when I was working, and I had my daughter. So, I didn't get funded for the I Have a Dream program.

I did eventually get my GED. This was, like, 2008. I was so happy. I was like, *Now I can go to college and further my education*. And I've just finished school in the health care field – and got a job as a medical assistant. I'm excited. I thought about health care so many times. But I basically doubted myself. And then, lately, I just keep hearing this voice, you know what I'm saying? It comes so natural when I'm doing it at work. So, I'm like, *Okay, I think this is my purpose*. And I want to go back to school this year for nursing, for my RN. I want to get it out of the way before I'm 40! I want to get all my certifications, my nursing degree. And then I'll leave my job working security. When I finish school completely, then I'll be really, really excited and comfortable. **I think once I finish school completely, I'll feel stable.**

›› Post-secondary Plans

20 of 29 Dreamers (69%) enrolled in technical or vocational schools, apprenticeship programs and/or programs designed to teach employment skills.*

Johnny Sidbury

Accountant, District of Columbia Government
Washington, D.C.

To be honest with you, the majority of us wouldn't even have made it through junior high school without Mrs. Rumbarger. Oh, words can't even explain some of the things that I've seen Mrs. Rumbarger do and what she means to me. She took care of some of us when we didn't have places to go, as far as, like, home at night. She kept some of us, clothed some of us, fed some of us. After a time, I didn't look at her as someone, you know, of a color or anything. She was, like, a blessing, like an angel to some of us. I know for a fact that Mrs. Rumbarger went too far out of the way at times, just to help us. Like, the neighborhood some of us used to live in, she used to drop us off or come get us with no fear whatsoever in her eyes. **And I'm like, wow, are you serious? Mrs. Rumbarger around Pitts Place?** I mean, it was like some places you just don't go to unless you from there or you know someone, you know? And for her to be a white woman, to do those things that she was doing – wow. You know, no one never harmed her or nothing. That's why I say, honestly, I feel as though Mrs. Rumbarger is like a angel. I really don't think she's human. I'm just exaggerating. But I think she and Mr. Bumbaugh were a gift from God to us all. I'm not going to say to some of us – to us all.

When Mr. Bumbaugh came, probably, like, eighth or ninth grade, we thought he was a teenager because of how young he looked! And we were like, *Man, shoot, we're not trying to listen to you*. But the first day Mr. Bumbaugh gets there, he breaks up a fight in school. And the brother had blood all on his shirt and tie, like, *What am I getting myself into?* But we really saw how serious he was. **Mr. Bumbaugh, man, he was one of a kind.** I've never met a man like him, intelligent as he was. The ones who needed special attention, they were focused, they listened to him. When teachers couldn't get things through, he would come along. And he was an athlete. When we used to go on field trips, camping trips, he let us get, like, 50 yards in front of him. And about the time of the finish line, you'd think a horse was running past you – that's how athletic he was. He was attentive to us. He didn't take no mess from us. Always well-dressed. He spoke Spanish and English. Had a good, open heart at all times. Honestly, I don't ever recall seeing Mr. Bumbaugh angry. He was like a **role model** of what a man should be at his age.

He would pick us up, play basketball with us on weekends. We would go over to his house. I mean, he showed us a part of Washington, D.C., that we didn't even know existed, because he lived in Georgetown at that time. He had a buddy who lived with him, he was a pilot for the United States Army or Navy. He kept us around real positive gentlemen, guys that were on his level. I used to hang around just to be around him. I don't know what the other guys were getting out of it, but I was watching how they were men, right? You know, they kept their watch on. They kept their hair cut, well-groomed. You know, it was about their business. It wasn't no half-stepping at all.

Probably going to the 12th-grade year, we went on a college tour. They told us, get copies of our report card, SAT score, and we'd go see if we can get accepted at

colleges. We started in Virginia, and I think we went as far as South Carolina or Georgia. At Johnson C. Smith, I filled out my application and they accepted me there on the spot! I was, like, "Excuse me, I have to call my mother." So I said, "Ma, I got accepted." She dropped the phone. Then my stepfather picked up the phone. **So my college career started from there. I stuck in there, I persevered and I graduated** – that's the main thing. I lived my dream: played college football. I tried out for the European league twice. That was a great experience for me. I feel as though without the I Have a Dream program and the things that they did for me, I probably wouldn't even have gone that far.

You know, I was debating about telling you this story, but I think I am [going to]. Probably my junior year in college, I had a sociology class. And my teacher was talking about how people do surveys, case studies – like, nine out of 10 … So, I'm sitting back, like, *Damn, was the I Have a Dream program a case study or something?* To see the number of black kids from my area that would graduate from junior high and high school and go to college and finish – when they know they have assistance going to college; would they take advantage of it? And you know, it bothered me a little bit when I thought it was a research thing. I was, like, *Man, hold up*. Because out of 67 of us, only six or seven – that I know of – went to college. That really bothered me, because if it was a case study, it seemed like a negative point of view of my generation. Like, you mean to tell me, out of 67 kids, you're only going to get four or five of them to finish a program? You know, what's the problem? I called Mr. Bumbaugh; I don't remember what he said, but he made me feel like it wasn't a case study.

If I had the opportunity to run a Fortune 500 company, I could probably name, like, five, 10, Dreamers right now who could probably run it – just off their wits. But it was just the neighborhood we were growing up in during that time. It was the Reagan-George Bush era. Crack epidemic. Becoming a teenager. You know, smelling yourself, wanting to have a girlfriend, wanting to be popular. And some of those things took some of us under; we didn't know how to control it once we got it. And then, once we realized we had too much of it, we couldn't deal with it. And some of us got killed throughout the years.

With Rafiq's mind, he could have been a civil rights leader. But just the neighborhood we lived in … Rafiq [a Dreamer] just got caught up.

Yeah, Rafiq got killed. That was a real tough time for me – I've been knowing Rafiq since I was, like, four years old. Rafiq was very intelligent, very focused. I'll give you an example of a conversation as a 13-, 14-year-old kid. We were walking down Good Hope Road, and someone was like, "Man, you know, Chinese people moving in, buying stores, they got everything in our neighborhood. We don't own nothing." So, Rafiq was, like, "You know what? You can't even be mad at them. We've been around here for years. The store had a for-sale sign on there for years. Your mother or father could have bought it. Don't blame them. You're to blame yourself." He was that type of guy. His family was very pro-black, a Black Panther type, Afrocentric type family.

I'm not talking bad about D.C. I'm not trying to talk bad about any of the Dreamers, it's just the way it was during that time.

And Kramer Junior High School, I mean, I lived a block away, and it used to take me, probably, like, 10, 15 minutes to get home. Kramer separated two street gangs. So, you had – I'm not trying to say the names – one gang on one side of Kramer and you had a gang on the other side. And imagine yourself leaving out the door wondering which way you're going to go, and you just live a block away. You know, neighborhood gangs fighting neighborhood gangs. You hear about it in school, and about the time 3 o'clock comes, it develops so much that – I mean, I'm not trying to be no punk or nothing, but I'm not trying to go out there and get into it or be an innocent bystander. This wasn't every day, but some moments it could be that way. Sometimes I notice that Mr. Bumbaugh and Mrs. Rumbarger used to have activities for us. So, we could probably stay a little bit at the school, let everything die down.

Then in high school, it was hard for me to get caught up in my neighborhood because I was never home. I started playing football at Eastern [High School], and by the time I got home, it was like 8:30, 9:00 at night. I mean, I'm exhausted, I just finished running like 21 sprints, you know. So I just look at my experience just totally different. I just tried to take full advantage of everything.

When I went to college, I took full advantage of everything, you know, a fraternity, football, campus life, living on my own. Didn't have Mommy or Daddy in the next room, you know, had to man up and make my own decisions even if it was right or wrong, you know, washing my own clothes. My attitude changed. It went from walking down the street not even saying nothing to the person you're passing by to "Hey, how you doing?" I kind of got used to that Southern hospitality, and when I came home it took me like two or three days to adjust.

Because you have to realize what was going on in the street, who was beefin' with who. It was like you're getting instructed all over. And I just got tired of it, so I was like you know what man, I'm going to just stay in Charlotte during the summer, work, work out, take some classes.

Without I Have a Dream, honestly, I probably wouldn't have gone to college. I probably would have done something basic, stayed in the area. I just thank God that, you know, I had a well-balanced home. That my mother and my father let me know that this was a blessing. And now, I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. I'm an accountant now for the District government. I'm thankful that I'm able to work in my career that I chose. I'm married. Three kids. You know, beautiful wife. And I appreciate it. You know, I mean, right now, I really don't want for anything. And if any of the Dreamers really need assistance, I'd do whatever I can for them – or for Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh and Mr. Bainum. You know, because [of where I came from], I really shouldn't be sitting here talking to you right now.

Keyda (Young) Walker

Bus Driver, D.C. Public Schools
Washington, D.C.

Even though I know my dream never came to reality, **I forfeited my dreams for my daughter.** And she's doing what my dream didn't allow me to do. She's doing it! My baby was a salutatorian in her high school, do you hear me? She got enough scholarships for college and graduate school. She's a junior at the University of Vermont now – and she loves it.

And I'm behind her 100%.

I had just got promoted from sixth grade, and my mom had got special permission – this is back when you had to stand in line to get out-of-boundary requests – to send me to Jefferson Junior High School or Deal. I got accepted to both. And then, this letter came in the mail with the possibility of a full scholarship to any college. My mother called and said, "Is my daughter safe?" Because Kramer Junior High School, during that time, was off the hook. I don't know who convinced her, but that's where I landed.

But God is good as far as sending me to Kramer, because I met *so* many people there. And we're still good friends now, to this day. And Mr. Bumbaugh came into our life, and he was very instrumental during that time. He was like a father, a big brother, you know, a motivator.

The program was an escape for me sometimes, getting away from what was surrounding us. You know, going to Mr. Bainum's house in the summer, and they're rewarding us for honor roll. Those were the best years of my life.

But you know, a lot of people were going through a lot back then. In the '80s, it was rough in D.C., especially Southeast. The drugs ripped a lot of families to shreds. And alcohol – we had a lot of Dreamers, their family members, mother or father was an alcoholic. It was *extremely* rough.

Our house was like a refuge for a lot of Dreamers, a safe haven. And they never knew, they never knew, my father was on drugs. Isn't that crazy? It was like the suburbs and the 'hood, do you hear me? You know how in the suburbs you don't know who's on drugs? My father was a functional junkie. He worked for the federal government, the IRS. He was on heroin throughout my whole life, and I was battling with that in my household – my mother working 12 hours, [my father] being high, you know, and I got to make sure me and my little brother eat, cook, clean.

And then, as years went by, ninth grade, I started rebelling. You know, *The attention can't always be on him and his drug habit. What about us?* So I started rebelling – and I got pregnant. Beginning of 10th grade. I was very disappointed. But, what could I do? I was depressed. My mom found out when I was seven months – that's how much she worked. I hid everything from her. I was, like, *How am I going to tell this lady? She's going to lose it.* Because she put a lot of responsibility on me. *I'm going to need you to do this.* You know, *I'm trying to work with your father.* I mean we had a rapport that I could talk to her, she could talk to me, so it really beat her up inside. My mother cried for two weeks straight. She told me, "You're going to finish school, or I'm going to kill you." Her exact words. So I knew I was going to finish.

It was rough. Believe me. I didn't know what I was signing up for then. I mean, the baby, my mom at work, my father doing this, my little brother doing that. [I was] absolutely drained. Mr. Bumbaugh and Mr. Bainum sent a tutor over to tutor me after I had my daughter, because I guess they didn't want me to miss things. It was a blessing that they did that for me. In 11th grade I slipped,

my grades plummeted, and Mr. Bumbaugh was like, "This is not you" – trying to motivate me. By my senior year, I got right back on track, back on the honor roll. And I graduated on time.

Before we were getting ready to graduate, I Have a Dream had a meeting with our parents. My mother came home slamming doors. That old lady was teed off, do you hear me? And I said, "What's going on?" The understanding earlier – I would say "misunderstanding" – had been that it was a full scholarship. Sitting back, maybe a lot of the money resources went to the ones that went to the boarding school. That was expensive, you know? But if it took that for you to save one of my brothers or sisters who was in a terrible situation growing up, and put them in boarding school, *do it*. Kudos, you hear me? Thank you. I'm not even mad, do you hear me? I mean, we were teed off then, but you got to get over it. I'm not blaming them. I just wish we had a better understanding of their intentions.

After finishing, I went away to St. Paul College in Lawrenceville, Virginia. I picked this school because you could take your child with you. But once I got there, all the dorms with the single moms were already booked up, so it was a total wreck. My mom was like, "Keyda, I want you to stay." I stayed for a year. But I had to come back; I was missing my daughter and didn't like it. I really regret that. I should have stayed there for four years and just finished it out. I enrolled into PG Community College, but I didn't finish there. I started to work, and went to a technical school for medical assistants. I used that training for a *long* time. I was in the abortion field. But I'm out of the medical field now. I drive the school bus for DCPS.

Even though I know my dream never came to reality, I forfeited my dreams for my daughter – how 'bout that? And she's doing what my dream didn't allow me to do. She's doing it! My baby was a salutatorian in her high school, Thurgood Marshall, do you hear me? She got enough scholarships for college and graduate school. She's at the University of Vermont now, and she loves it. She loves it. And I'm behind her 100%. Every day. And if I don't talk to her within a day, I have the chief of security's number down. One day I didn't talk to her, I put an APB out on her. She was so embarrassed. She called me and she said, "I'm grown." "You're not grown yet. You're grown when you turn 21 and you're out of my house. I want you to call me *every day*." Everybody look at me like, *You're crazy*. I don't care. It's too much going on out here. I have plans for Brianna. I'm glad she didn't have a baby. That's a double blessing. I just want her to stay focused. And then my son – they're almost nine years apart – was sixth place in the geography bowl in fifth grade. That's his little accomplishment. They know: Education is first.

So, I mean, sometimes you have to devour your dreams in order for your kids to grow. I was really, really hard on myself for not finishing school. And I can go back, yes, I can. It's never too late. But if my dream is living through them, and they're making it, I'm *loving* it.

Brenda Durrett

Keyda's Mother

The program made Keyda aware of education with her daughter. Her daughter now has a full scholarship to Vermont ... And even though my son wasn't in the program, he does the same things with his children. He got that from Keyda.

The program started at a time when the drug war was going on in D.C. And we all had these perfect dreams that we wanted our kids to do more than we did, you know? The program had good academics for the Dreamers, Keyda was in all these activities, they had a lot of little trips. And Mr. Bumbaugh, he was amazing. And still is. They still talk about him and stay in contact with him. I mean, he would visit your house, he would ask you what was up. He wasn't scared of the families or scared of getting his hands on stuff. If he sees something going wrong, he'll send an alert out to you and let you know. Mr. Bumbaugh used to call and reinforce things, like, "Keyda did this really, really well." Or, "Keyda needs to calm down." He was a hands-on person. And they loved him.

I just hated the part of them going in schools in these communities where they needed a bulletproof vest. I mean, shootings and everything were going on, and my kid had to go through this neighborhood to get to school. And then I don't know if the community ... I don't know what influences played a part in her teenage pregnancy. I don't know how many pregnancies were going on at the school.

I think, at the time, they were doing what they could do, but some of the kids didn't get the opportunity that other kids got. [Some] were going to private school for whatever reason. Maybe they needed to put these kids there because something is going on in their family life that's not in yours. I'm not sure. But some of the kids were getting upset. So-and-so is going to private school, but we can't go?

I wish I had not been so anxious, working, keeping my kids safe. I guess we were so hungry for our kids to go to college, we didn't read the dotted line or we didn't hear what we thought we were hearing. I'm thinking this is a full ride to college. Maybe the communication was off. We were just thinking *Lord, if we just get them to college. And outta here.*

But you know, it made Keyda aware of education with her daughter. Her daughter has a full scholarship to Vermont. I mean, it's just wonderful. [Keyda] was much more hard on her than [I was on Keyda]. And even though my son wasn't in the program, he does the same things with his children; he got that from Keyda.

›› Next Generation

Of Dreamers surveyed, 100% report expecting and encouraging their children to go to college.*

D'Angelo Dotson

Military Equipment Instructor
Baghdad, Iraq

I'm thankful to the I Have a Dream program for giving me a shot, for investing their hopes and their emotions and their time and their faculties in my future. That right there made me feel like I could do a lot more than what I thought I was capable of, because the environment a lot of us grew up in was very negative.

And if it weren't for the program, **I know that I wouldn't have been able to have the chance – or the courage – to really leave my comfort zone, to not let my environment define me.**

My mom told me she worried from the day I was born about how I was going to be in life, how she wanted me to be better than her. I think every parent wants that; every parent *should* want that. When she found out about the I Have a Dream program, she was relieved. It meant so much more to her, at the time, than it did to me. I was a little too young to fully understand the impact this would have on me. I pretty much thought *Oh, cool, we get to go on trips twice a year.* Or something like that. But I've come to realize it was a lot more. It was somebody giving you a chance to be something when it would have been very difficult on your own, if not impossible. At least, not at the rate that people did.

I think we Dreamers felt like we were kind of set apart from everybody else; there were people that actually cared about our education and our well-being, and they tried their best and gave extra time to help us focus and be more successful. Day in, day out, they're on the phone with you. They come see you on weekends, going that extra mile. I'm thankful for that. Without that, probably a good portion of us might not have been as successful as we are now. To be honest, I mean, I would have probably become a statistic.

In my neighborhood, it was an average of two out of five people selling drugs or dropping out of school. One out of 10 people being either a victim or committing homicide. My mom definitely kept me out of trouble, tried her best. But she couldn't be with me 24/7, so if it wasn't for having this influence at school, where you end up spending almost a third of your life up until you're 18 anyway, who knows what would have happened. Or at least not reached the level of success that I've had over these past several years. It's good to have as many people as you can in your life who want you to see more than what's in your environment, to see the better, more positive, aspects of life. You know, don't become your environment, be better than it. If it weren't for the program, I *know* I wouldn't have been able to have the chance – or the courage – to really leave my comfort zone, to leave home. And although there's nothing wrong with being at home, we all should aspire to higher things in life. Even if you fail.

I know I wasn't always the easiest student, the best student. I had potential, but I had a hard time focusing. **But one of the big things I always remember was that despite the fact that I was a little difficult, no one gave up on me.** They put even more effort into ensuring that I nailed down the subjects and got my assignments in and everything like that. I mean, at times Mrs. Rumbarger came to my house and sat there and helped me through my assignments. It showed me that if I put forth the effort, then the rewards or the benefits were going to be great. And it showed me that a lot of people were investing their hopes and their emotions and their time and their faculties in my future. And that right there really made me feel like I could do a lot more than what I thought I was capable of.

I went to Mt. Vernon Academy, and being away from home and everything like that, it was a lot more independence and freedom. And of course, when you're at that age, you have a lot more opportunity to mess up, because you get sidetracked by everything else other than your studies. So, I had some difficulty with that.

I actually had trouble my junior year, and I had to leave the school. It was, I'm going to say, shenanigans of a teenage boy, pretty much. It was a silly school prank that went bad. When I left and I had to come back to D.C., I went to Eastern [High School]. That was probably one of the most difficult times in my life. I could see that Mrs. Rumbarger and Mr. Bumbaugh were rightly disappointed, but they didn't make me feel any worse than I already was feeling. Because I felt disappointed myself. I finally came to the realization that I had a very rare opportunity, and I was messing it up.

I at least tried to apologize for my behavior back then. I was a little bit of their special project at times. But after I got in trouble – that was really, really close – I made sure that I tried to find balance, you know, have fun but get my work done first. I try to keep that philosophy – which now I tend to be way more work than I am fun. My daughter tells me I need to lighten up.

At Eastern, I actually had one of my best years. I almost had a 4.0 GPA. I had to reapply to get back into Mount Vernon for senior year. They convened the school's faculty board. And on a probational basis, I came back, on the promise that I wouldn't get in any more trouble and would adhere to school policy and everything. After I got that second chance, of course, I didn't get in any more trouble, and I graduated.

I started at Pacific Union College, and I've got to say I wasn't as mature as I needed to be. I finished a year and then I thought, instead of wasting a lot of money – it was around $24,000 a year – and time, you know, mine and other people's, I thought maybe I should take a break and try to figure out what exactly I wanted to do and what I wanted to get out of my education. I came to the decision to join the military and signed up for college money and a two-year enlistment. Fifteen years later, I had traveled all over the world. I lived in Asia, spent some time in Africa and served in almost every major conflict, from the Balkans, Bosnia and Macedonia, Kosovo, to four tours in Iraq, not counting my assignment now. That was an education in and of itself.

After I got out of the military, I landed here [Iraq] as a military equipment instructor. My client is the Iraqi government. My contract is up in July. So **this summer I'm planning on re-enrolling in school so I can do that *one* thing I haven't done for my life, that I've wanted to finish: my bachelor's.** I've taken a couple classes a year – actually 1.3 classes a year over 14 years, and I'm 32 credits shy.

The biggest thing I'm thankful for is the I Have a Dream program looking at me and giving me a shot. Because the environment a lot of us grew up in was very negative. Some of the people we lived with were negative. So, a lot of times, the school is the only chance for you to get away from this negative environment. For some kids, that's all they have.

Of course, we're told from a young age that, you know, you got to go to school, get your education, so you can get a good job, so you can make money, so you can have things. Well, a lot of people out there that were, you know, conducting illegal activity – they already had things. And at *my* age. So, it was very tempting to circumvent the process.

But I think that the Dreamer program made me want more than just material objects; **it made me aspire to do the best for myself and to be someone I could respect.** Of course, your [own] opinion matters most, but when you're a child, you're looking for outward approval.

But I think seeing Mr. Bumbaugh graduating from an Ivy League college, I'm thinking to myself, maybe **I** could do that. **It put that seed of inspiration inside you, thinking that you *can* be more than just a little black child growing up in allegedly the most dangerous city in the world.**

And the fact that I lived there, grew up and survived it is an accomplishment in and of itself. Not even counting all the other things I've done in my life. Just being able to say that I lived through that, and I didn't let my environment affect me or drag me down.

That's a very positive thing, and that's something that I think all of us should go back and tell these children today: I did it, so you can too. You have just as much potential.

›› Obstacles to Graduation

Dreamers surveyed cited the following top three reasons for not graduating high school or completing college:

›› Needed to work (52.6%)
›› Had family/baby/pregnancy (47.4%)
›› Affordability (36.8%)*

Tenille Warren

Artist and Fashion Design Student
Brooklyn, N.Y.

It's so surreal to think back on what a privilege that was to have this sort of program come in and make that kind of impact on your life. **And because they did it for me, I always feel like I want to do that for somebody.** There's so many Tenilles in the world who want to know, how do I break this generational curse? … I'm part of a generation that received a **gift**. And you want to continue to pass that gift on from generation to generation.

Mr. Bumbaugh is a very persistent man. Very persistent. I tried everything I could to push this man away. I was really not interested. I didn't even know what I was a part of. I mean, I had been given some information about the [I Have a Dream] program, but it was really hard to focus on anything like that, you know? My home life was a major distraction. But I'll tell you, because Mr. Bumbaugh was so persistent, I had to let go of the pity party, break that whole self-pity thing that I had happening. He wouldn't allow it. He wouldn't allow the negativity. He wouldn't allow the self-negative talk. He wouldn't allow the defeated spirit. He wouldn't allow the laziness. He would not allow it. He was perfect for that program!

So for me, I Have a Dream is synonymous with this man. He was like our guardian angel. He cared for our lives, gave more attention to our lives than our families did. I don't know everybody's family story, I really don't. But definitely, whatever our parents were doing at home, when he came in, he broke that mold of whatever is going on that doesn't line up with what this program wants to happen for you. I don't know what they told him in his handbook when he was employed, but whatever it said, he was, for me personally, the greatest benefit of that program.

And Mr. Bumbaugh took that extra step to come outside of just the school walls to come into our homes and to deal with our family issues and our neighborhood lifestyles. Because there were things that I would go through at home that had nothing to do with his role at I Have a Dream, but he would be there, you know? A prime example: My mom sometimes would get drunk and put her hands on us. One particular time, she had gotten drunk, and she had hit me with a baseball bat. And when my sister came home and she saw that, she was really upset; she was always upset with my mother. So my sister called Mr. Bumbaugh, and he came to the house. My mom ended up getting arrested, but he came, and he rode to the hospital with me, because the police said, "She has to go to the hospital." I'm like *This is my mother. This is what she does, you know. I'm used to it by now.* My sister made a big deal about it. The police made a big deal of it. Mr. Bumbaugh, he took it seriously and everything, but you know, he stayed calm. And he just went to the hospital with me. I don't think that's something they ask you to do.

Like, no one's going to ask you,

"*Hey, we've got this girl, she's a Dreamer, and she's in an abusive home. Go over and get involved. Get invested*." I mean, no one asks that. At best, they're asking you to provide some guidance in their schoolwork, make sure they're behaving, help them with some college applications – that sort of thing. But nobody asks you to care. You know, ***Could you give a damn a little bit? Could you care?*** But Mr. Bumbaugh and Mrs. Rumbarger are people who actually did care, you know, you could tell that they actually did. And we were not angels. We could give you a run for your money!

I guess Mr. Bumbaugh just sees people at their potential. And he has a knack for identifying what he feels people are good at, paying attention to what your gifts and talents are, and finding ways to help you to put them to use. He's the reason why I ended up at an art school when I was in high school. All of the other Dreamers went to Eastern Senior High, and I end up all the way up in Georgetown, by myself, going to Duke Ellington from 8:00 to 5:00. And I'm like, *Why would you do that?* It took a long time for me to even accept my artistic talent as a part of me. Initially, it was just something that I did for my mother because I saw how much she enjoyed it. And I was upset with my mother, because she told me I had to go there [to Duke Ellington]. I was, like, "Mr. Bumbaugh put that bright idea in your head." I wasn't necessarily mad at him because by that time, I already knew the type of person he was and knew that he was always expecting the best and always driving that greater potential that's deep within. But she kind of surprised me. And it wasn't until I graduated and I had done so many different things creatively that I was able to tell her thank you. It was the best thing she had ever done for me.

And to this day, she's always believed in me as an artist, even when she doesn't believe in anything else. You know, and I'm talking about a woman who doesn't believe in much at all, who's not the supportive type. She's usually to herself and by herself, and she's, I guess, I can't even call it pessimistic. She just doesn't dream or hope for much at all. That was one of the reasons why I really didn't hold onto art as I got older, you know: *Don't try if you think you might be disappointed*.

After I was done with high school, I wasn't thinking about a career as an artist. I was thinking about making money so that I could move out of the ghetto. Like, *I gotta get out of here!* I was not interested in college. I guess it's, like, the cultural thing – that's not what was being encouraged, you know. Yeah, that's always been encouraged in the school, but in the home life, everything was contrary to that. It was all about get out there and get on your own. You know? So, I had no interest

or desire for school after high school. It was all about taking care of myself. When you get to 18, you're grown and you have to take care of yourself and do things on your own.

For me, that was the hardest thing: How do you detach from this poverty mindset that you've grown up with for some 20-odd years and try and inherit a mindset of reaching your greatest potential?

Like, how do you *do* that when all you know is to just give up, live wild and reckless; you don't value life. I had low self-esteem. I was struggling with just that whole cultural … just whatever you want to call it – my pastor labels it a generational curse. And when you struggle with that, that's a huge stain to carry around.

It can be broken, but it takes people who break the curse to be willing to reach out to others and show them what they did, show them how to do it. I think that everybody can be reached. I guess you share a piece of what you have in your life with them so that they can get to a place where they believe in something too.

Once I was able to get past the whole, I guess, safe zone – the safety of making enough money to take care of myself, of not being afraid of being an artist – doors just opened. In 2004, I went with my church to help establish a new church in Atlanta. And every day going to work, I would pass this school called Savannah College of Art and Design. I would stare at that school. And one day, I just decided, I'm going to schedule a tour. On our tour, they took us to the fashion design department, [and] I cried. I cried. It just broke my heart – but broke it in a good way, like, *You can be free now. You can let go.* I was still keeping so many different parts of myself in a shell. I was like, *I belong here. I want to do this!*

And so I allowed myself to believe and to dream that fashion design is what I want to do. I'm talking about fighting back tears, because I didn't want nobody to see me crying. It just kind of brought me back to if – I'm sure everybody's had that – if I knew then what I know now, I would have made a different choice, you know? I would have definitely gone to a four-year college and studied something that meant a lot to me. I didn't know what to do with college when I came out of high school. I didn't know what to think of it. All I had heard was "Get a good job. Get a good education, you'll get a good job." But I felt like I already had a pretty good job, you know?

Eventually, I decided to go ahead and look for student loans. And I went to the Art Institute of Atlanta. I did that for a year, while I also pursued an internship in New York at Rocawear, the clothing line owned by Jay-Z. I got a phone call in 2009. The lady said, "Tenille, you're in Atlanta. Please tell me how are you going to get to New York for this internship thing?" And I told her, I said, "Don't worry about it. There's a lot of people who know how badly I want this. They'll get me there." I said, "I'm going to get me a job, I'm going to find me a place to live." And I got on a plane to New York and never looked back. And I'm still here, still trying. And now I'm in college at Fashion Institute of Technology.

It's so surreal to think back on that stuff, to think back at what a privilege it was to have this sort of program come in and make that kind of impact on your life. And because they did it for me, I always feel like I want to do that for somebody. There's so many Tenilles in the world who want to know, *how do I break this generational curse?*

I can't contain what that organization blessed me with. And as long as I'm growing, that gift that I received is growing in me. I'm still working off what was invested in me. I've seen where you stay diligent, where you are persistent. Where you are committed and dedicated to a vision. I've seen what that looks like in the end. It looks like me!

It goes back to that **responsibility that I felt like I had as a Dreamer** because people were invested in me; I felt it was a huge investment in my life. It's taught me to be more disciplined and to always strive, and it kind of built this character – it added to the character. So now I feel like they've done their part for me, now I do my part. The same way my pastor talked about the generational curse, and how that curse is handed down, there's also a gift. I'm

part of a generation that received a gift. And you want to continue to pass that gift on from generation to generation.

›› Impact

Of Dreamers surveyed, 80% reported that the program was either "very helpful" or "one of the most helpful things" in their life.*

DREAMERS: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In 1988, amid increasing violence and instability in southeast Washington, D.C., fueled by a devastating crack cocaine epidemic, businessman Stewart Bainum made a commitment to 67 rising seventh-graders at Kramer Junior High School. Following the model of the national I Have a Dream Foundation, he pledged to help the students prepare for college and then provide college scholarships to those who graduated from high school.

Mr. Bainum, founder of the Bainum Family Foundation (known then as the Commonweal Foundation), and his dedicated program team spent the next decade following through on this commitment, ultimately helping the "Dreamers" beat the odds in a poverty-stricken corner of the nation's capital.

Two decades later, the Foundation revisited the program leaders and 12 of the Dreamers. These are their stories of how the program changed their lives.

* * *

Learn about the continued efforts of the Bainum Family Foundation to provide high-quality educational opportunities and other support to children and families living in poverty.

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