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Student Spotlight

December 2020

Dekendrick Wilson
2020 Graduate
Fort Lauderdale, FL



2020 was a year full of challenges for many, but for Dekendrick Wilson, the silver lining was completing high school and receiving his diploma – a significant milestone that was made possible by his determination and a AAA Scholarship that enabled him to attend a school that put him on a path to success.

Dekendrick attended public school through elementary and middle school, but over the years his grades began to decline and his grade point average (GPA) dropped to a 1.9 by his 10th grade year.

“I was overwhelmed, but I wasn’t sure how to get help,” says Dekendrick. “There were a lot of kids in my classes and I was not able to get the one-on-one attention I needed.”

Dekendrick and his mom, Toni Grant, knew changes needed to be made, but were unsure of their options. Dekendrick has five other biological siblings and lives with his single mom; private school appeared to be out of reach financially. However, a scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation opened up a world of opportunity and Dekendrick was able to enroll in JAM Preparatory Academy of Excellence during his 11th grade year.

Founded in 2016, JAM Preparatory Academy focuses on individualized learning with one-on-one support to either remediate student skills if deficient or enrich students working on and above grade level. The school focuses on kinesthetic learning, where students learn through hands-on experiences, technology and industry professionals. JAM also implements a gradual release model, which allows students to see models and examples of what they are expected to learn.

With the individualized attention he received from his teachers at JAM Prep, Dekendrick was able to really focus on his work and his grades began to improve. By the time he reached his senior year, he had brought his GPA up from a 1.9 to above a 3.0.

“Attending JAM Prep helped me completely change my mindset because my teachers believed in me and gave me the confidence to try my best,” says Dekendrick. “They taught me that in order to accomplish something, you have to work hard and work smart. They taught me how to set goals for myself.”

Dekendrick’s perseverance and hard work stood out to the staff at JAM Prep as well, as he began to excel both in and out of the classroom.

“Dekendrick's school performance, motivation and work ethic not only improved, but catapulted to the next level while at JAM Preparatory Academy of Excellence,” says Dr. Martine Joseph-Johnson, principal of the school. “The academic support provided by the staff gave him what he needed to excel beyond his expectations. The athletic program gave him the confidence needed to literally score the winning touchdown at South Florida's annual private versus public school football tournament. His work ethic became more evident in school, during his community service as well as on the football field.”

With nearly 25 percent of students at JAM Prep receiving a AAA Scholarship, and still more receiving other forms of financial assistance, Dr. Joseph-Johnson has seen firsthand the tremendous impact that educational options have on students like Dekendrick. “The AAA Scholarship program has lifted the burden off several families at our school, allowing them to overcome the financial struggles of paying for a private education and smaller learning environments,” she says.

Like most of the students in our country, the Covid-19 pandemic greatly impacted Dekendrick’s senior year. Traditional festivities at his school – like prom and the senior picnic – were cancelled. But learning continued – albeit virtually – and Dekendrick proudly received his high school diploma in the Spring of 2020 and even earned a full scholarship to attend Miles College in Birmingham, Ala.

While the Covid-19 pandemic also caused him to delay his plans to attend college immediately, Dekendrick is utilizing his time at home to gain some valuable work experience and save up some money. He hopes to begin college in the spring of 2021, even if that means taking online courses. When asked about his goals for the next five years, Dekendrick has his sights set high. He wants to master the stock market, pursue a career in the business field and perhaps even dabble in real estate.

When asked what he would say to the donors who make the scholarship program possible, Dekendrick says, “I am honored and truly appreciative of the opportunities they gave me. And I would encourage companies to continue to support these scholarships so you can help other kids like me. In doing so, you are helping them change their mindset, helping them to believe in themselves and making it possible for them to change their future.”

About AAA Scholarship Foundation

AAA Scholarship Foundation promotes the advancement of education by administering educational choice programs. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 80 percent of these children are initially awarded AAA scholarships while living in households with annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.



Many are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they first receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and are concerned about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their children and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and potential lifelong negative impacts. They wish to change their children's learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada by companies that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only 501(c)(3) nonprofit scholarship organizations approved to administer these legislatively-authorized tax credit scholarship programs in multiple states. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information, or to learn how your company can participate in the program, visit www.AAAScholarships.org, or contact Kerri Vaughan at kerri@aaascholarships.org or 888-707-2465 ext. 730.