

CHANGING LIVES

SUCCESS STORIES FROM YOUTH BUILD PARTICIPANTS

Watson Dupree, 19



"This is where it starts for people that have a criminal background, that have [a] rough past and want to have a turning point in their life, *this* is where they come." Watson Dupree speaks about the Youth Empowerment program at the Urban League of Broward County. When asked about the direct role Youth Build plays in his life, he continues, "It is more than just [obtaining] a GED--for some of us, it's a family." Watson, who

currently lives in the Covenant House shelter, and views his classmates and program directors as the family he never had.

Watson Dupree has been living on his own since the age of 16. While living at the shelter Watson met Kenroy Shand, a graduate of the program, who recommended he try the Youth Build. Watson and his girlfriend are expecting their first child this year which was a key factor in his decision to enroll. "I want to be the best positive role model."

Although Watson has no criminal background, he knows that having an education can make a major difference in his life. According to the program director, Jeaneen West, before joining the program, Watson didn't believe that he could be successful. He now serves as Vice President of the Leadership Committee for the program. After completion of the program, Watson Dupree plans to attend Broward College to study Business Management and to launch his own business as a janitorial service provider. "Watson is one of my best

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leaders, despite his situation, he continues to strive for success and he shows up everyday with a winning attitude, “says West.

Michael Moise, 25



On November 13, 2008, Michael Moise received a \$1,000 scholarship following successful completion of the Youth Build program. Michael represents one of the program’s most inspiring success stories. Before coming to the Urban League of Broward County, Michael struggled in school and did not consider attending any educational institutions. Today, Michael says he would like to use the scholarship towards pursuing a Business degree at Miami Dade College.

As a teenager, Michael was overwhelmed with the responsibility of helping his single mother take care of the household. “As I grew older I was tired of seeing my mom crying because of the mountain of past due bills and barely having enough food to feed me. So I decided to do something about it, I started hanging around the neighborhood drug dealers.” Michael was exposed to an influx of illegal activity that was growing rapidly in his community and soon after followed the dangerous trend. This decision ultimately led to Michael’s incarceration at the tender age of seventeen. Michael was convicted of armed robbery and armed kidnapping and sentenced to six years in prison.

Upon release, his uncle heard a radio advertisement for the Urban League’s Youth Build and referred it to Michael. With the support of the program directors, Michael fully committed himself to

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completing the coursework. Michael's participation in the program eventually became his "saving grace." Moise was scheduled to appear before a judge for sentencing in an unrelated assault charge. On the day of his appearance, Michael presented his program certificates and related coursework to the judge. Upon review of Michael's progress, the judge released him. Michael Moise successfully completed the Youth Build program in 2008. West touches on his new position at the Urban League of Broward County, "Michael's dedication and leadership earned him a position as the assistant to the YouthBuild program working with the Case Managers, Job Developer and Program Manager."

When Michael reflects on his life, he credits the Youth Build program at the Urban League of Broward County for helping make a positive step towards change.

Jasmine Chance, 19

Of the 34 students enrolled in the program, eight of them are female. Jasmine Chance is a single mother of a two year old. After experiencing trouble with the law, Jasmine was introduced to the program by Michael Moise. Jasmine completed high school but failed the FCAT and was unable to obtain her diploma. Jasmine believes that the Youth Build program will be a quick and easy way of obtaining a GED, and therefore, helping her achieve her long term goal of having a career in pediatrics.



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Anthony Seeney, 18



Originally from Baltimore, Anthony and his family moved to Florida after their house was destroyed by fire. Anthony grew a disinterest in high school and eventually dropped out in his sophomore year.

Anthony soon realized that without a high school diploma or GED, it was almost impossible to secure a decent job.

Anthony heard about the Youth Build program through another program participant, Kenroy Shand. After completion of the program, Seeney plans to attend Broward College in hopes of one day becoming a veterinarian. "Seeney has shown a great deal of focus and commitment and is one of the most advanced in this year's class. Within 30 days, he was ready to take his GED test," says West.