

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 49: Donny

Welcome TO JUST WORDS—The stories of working people in our community.

Donny is a young man from Baltimore. He began dealing drugs at age 14. He was incarcerated as a juvenile and spent time at boys village and bowling brook preparatory school, a privately run residence for juvenile offenders. When he was released, he had no formal education, no degree. He could have ended up back on the streets slinging dope.

But against all odds, he didn't. Amid the clank of spoons and dishes, he tells the story of how he came to be a prep cook at the Dogwood Restaurant in Hampden.

I was going to go to saint Ambrose 12 week program for cooking, but I heard about the Dogwood institute for gourmets, and they said this was an excellent program. It's an apprentice class—12 months, and I become a sous chef. So I said, that sound very good, I think I better hop on that, and it's free. So, I came in for my orientation the first day. Did my orientation—this was just to go to school. I never anticipated on working here, but the first time I seen it, I said, I'd love to work here. I came in for my orientation, the interview was over, it was good, I helped out in the kitchen, stayed for a couple of hours. So I went on home and over a couple of days I kept calling here seeing what was going on, was I accepted into the program for school. And in the process of that, he asked me did I want the job, and I said yes. So I said, not only do I have the job, and I can go to school, and it just opened up a whole bunch of opportunity for me.

A whole bunch of new professional opportunity, yes....but Donny's new job and life has led to a change in his personal life as well, one that has to do with two of his sisters.

I take care of my sisters, my sisters live with me, the only thing they got to go to their mother for is things that mother is supposed to do, make sure school books there, clothes there, but everything else, the discipline and stuff, it come from me. It wasn't like this a couple of months ago, but they see that I am making a big change, so its like, they always seen it, but to see me make that jump over to something positive and seeing me be a leader, I don't know what that do for her, but I guess she like that, so.

He has his family behind him...he's got a new job, and is getting an education...he's come a long way from the kid who stood on the corners selling cocaine and heroin.

I enjoy life. I'm like a homebody, I don't go out. I like to hang out with my son and I am trying to teach him, there's more to life, I really don't, when I say there is more to life I mean to show him at an early age how to be productive, how to be an entrepreneur. My dream is to own a restaurant too for it could be 500 hot dog stands, I don't care. Long as I got a network going on I am all right With that, snowball machines, vending machines ice cream machines anything. I like to do stuff for other people. I really like to help people or let people know what is available to them if they are trying to progress in life. Over the last couple of months it has been growing on me, so I be trying to let a lot of people know there is better ways to do things.

Donny has already started making a difference in other people's lives. He's already helped create a class to help people in similar situations get their GED's

Music: *Modd Swing* by Asheru and Blue Black.

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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