

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO DO HARD THINGS?



2020 is shining a spotlight on many hard things we face every day. With each struggle, we emerge stronger. Enjoy these inspiring stories of people overcoming hard things.



MEET KAYLEE, THE BEYOND SCHOOL SCHOLAR WHO INSPIRED TONIGHT'S THEME:

Kaylee struggled mightily with her classwork as she started 4th grade. Hearing her Success Coach constantly remind the class, "You can do hard things," Kaylee used the phrase to empower herself and her classmates to accomplish hard tasks. She ends every virtual session by saying, "I'll see you tomorrow! You can do hard things."



ELISHA

HARD THING: BEING A SINGLE, WORKING MOTHER

As a single mother, Elisha knows that raising a daughter is difficult. Working late hours on a limited budget prevented Elisha from picking up her daughter, Harmoni, after school and affording an aftercare program. Finding Beyond School was a blessing for their family, providing Harmoni with space to academically thrive while giving Elisha peace of mind during work.

“Without this program, I would have no clue how I would be able to afford aftercare for my child or even make it to pick her up in time. The program has been a true blessing to my daughter and I this school year.”

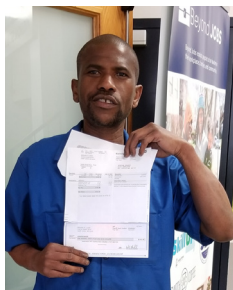


LAWRENCE

HARD THING: BATTLING THE STIGMA OF INCARCERATION

Lawrence knows all too well the stigma of a felony. Employers often do not give men like Lawrence the opportunity to pursue a fulfilling career. He left prison with his eyes set on quality employment. He used his time in Beyond Jobs to become a better, stronger worker. His persistent growth earned him a job at Pro Pool and a pay raise after only two months.

“I invested myself in Mission: St. Louis, which in reality is investing in myself. I’ve only ever needed a chance, and they provided that for me.”



ADRIAN

HARD THING: SUSTAINING EMPLOYMENT

Adrian has a long history of brief stints of employment. His drug use made keeping a job difficult, leaving him without a phone or car. Mission: St. Louis represented a new start, a new chance to find success. Adrian took advantage of his opportunity, committing himself to developing core job skills. He recently celebrated his six-month anniversary with Associated Equipment and has used his earnings to purchase a new phone and car.

“(This opportunity) is one of the most wonderful things to ever happen to me. I’ve got something to look forward to. I appreciate getting my work clothes ready at night to get up and go in the morning!”

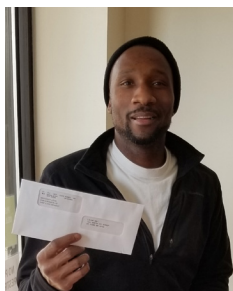


ELISA

HARD THING: CHALLENGING HER COMFORT ZONE

Following Michael Brown’s death, Elisa desperately wanted to better understand the experiences of her Black middle-school students. Hearing about the Beyond Jobs program, she began to volunteer with men who had vastly different lives than her own. The experience was a new beginning for Elisa, transforming how she viewed race and identity. Elisa continues to serve with Beyond Jobs, eager to grow with each new mentee she meets.

“It has allowed me to get outside of myself and see a bigger world, to be part of a bigger story.”



LAVON

HARD THING: EXCELLING AT A JOB AFTER INCARCERATION

Lavon has found it difficult to gain employment with a felony on his record. Having been incarcerated twice, he understands the employment barriers he faces, but as he says, that's the past. Today, his focus is on providing a stable future for his family. Lavon is already well on his way, entering his sixth month with Responsible Container and having recently moved into better housing.

"It makes me feel like my life is headed in the best direction it can."



PAULETTE

HARD THING: TAKING CARE OF AN AGING LOVED ONE

Paulette's world came to a screeching halt the moment her father fell. What started as temporary assistance turned into years of constant care. Paulette and her husband moved into her father's house for three years to care for him. When they were able to move back into their own home, they discovered that years of neglect had led to many needed repairs, particularly from a leaky roof. To ease further hardship resulting from her dad's fall, Mission: St. Louis was able to help out with plumbing and painting, helping restore the home to a safe living environment.

"We had to get the money to repair the rooms and roof and paint it all. Mission: St. Louis absolutely eased a burden. I cannot say enough good things about them."



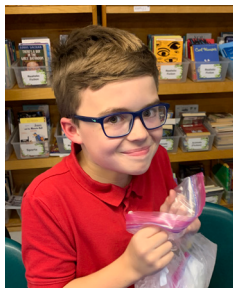


BETTY

HARD THING: MAINTAINING A HOUSE FROM 1888

Betty lives in a beautiful, historic North City home that was built in 1888. After her husband passed away, the 62-year-old faced great difficulty battling her grief alongside increasingly demanding home maintenance. Betty called Mission: St. Louis, and Jacob from Home Repair came out to replace needed appliances and fix the aging bathtub.

“Since my husband passed it’s been tough, but I’m getting back on track taking care of everything. I love all of the Mission: St. Louis team, especially Jacob. I’ll take him every time I need help here.”



COLLIN

HARD THING: OVERCOMING BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

As a working mom, Amy has always had her sons in afterschool programs. Her son, Collin, often had difficulties with his behavior in large groups and was kicked out of several other afterschool programs. At one point, Amy was told that Collin “could not be successful” in their program. Beyond School was a breath of fresh air. His small academic groups and enrichment classes gave Collin something to look forward to every day. He is thriving in Beyond School.

“Both boys have gone from begging to be pulled from aftercare to begging me not to pick them up until the very end at 6pm!” - Amy, Collin’s Mother



OPAL

HARD THING: TRANSITIONING INTO A NEW FAMILY AND SCHOOL

Opal spent much of her childhood navigating the foster care system with her brother, Marcus. Through thick and thin, they relied on one another, weathering difficult times until being adopted together. Before their senior year of high school, the siblings were forced to transfer schools. Opal took it hardest and struggled to confront the loss of her friends and classmates. She leaned on Beyond School to cope, allowing her to persevere through the year.

“Mission: St. Louis made me realize I had more potential than I was telling myself. They brought out the better me!”



JAMIE

HARD THING: PURSUING HER DREAM OF BECOMING A BARBER

Jamie felt stuck working as a school bus driver. For years, she had longed to become a barber but lacked the opportunity to move forward. Then, Jamie became involved with Mission: St. Louis. Here, she received the tuition assistance to make her dream a reality. Jamie is currently excelling in her barber class and will soon earn her certification.

“I would consider myself a fighter. I never give up. I remain positive, humble and keep the push going. I will keep going until I cannot go further.”

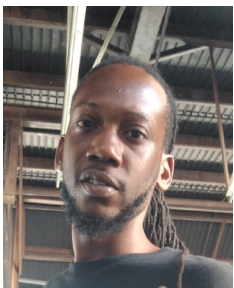


KAEMON

HARD THING: LOSING A LOVED ONE

Kaemon had a difficult time when his grandpa died. He was often consumed with grief, struggling to cope with knowing the man he long looked up to was no longer around. As he was overcoming the loss, Kaemon realized that he was making poor decisions while grieving. He promised himself to grow beyond it. Working with his Success Coach, Kekua “Q”, Kaemon held true to his promise and blossomed into a strong classroom leader.

“Beyond School has really helped me with (becoming a better person) and with doing math extremely well. Ms. Q helps me keep going when I don’t understand my math lesson and I get frustrated or a low grade.”



MANDELOIN

HARD THING: PROVING HIMSELF THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

Mandeloin is a driven man. Desperate to prove himself through employment, he walked into Mission: St. Louis looking for an opportunity. Seeing his deep fire and passion, the Beyond Jobs team worked to place Mandeloin in a fulfilling position. Equipped with a new job at Responsible Container, Mandeloin is working towards securing his forklift certification and commercial driver’s license.

“I’m just trying to get better. (Mission: St. Louis), they’re good people (who) I really do appreciate.”

YOUR INVESTMENT TONIGHT OVERCOMES HARD THINGS.

Mission: St. Louis' work would not be possible without you.
Join our inspiring community of people doing hard things.



MISSION: ST. LOUIS GALA