

MENTORING STORIES OF IMPACT

ADAM & MARQUEL



Adam & Marquel: Matched on September 28, 2009

Marquel and I met seven years ago when he was 11 years old and starting the sixth grade. He was living in Western Heights and his father was incarcerated at the time. I remember that he really wanted to go to Chuck E Cheese the first time we met! Middle school years were hard for Marquel, he was suspended on average once a month during his sixth grade year. The suspensions were for inappropriate contact with peers, posturing, threatening and talking back to teachers. These suspensions continued in his seventh grade year as well. Those around him said he was destined for the streets and to follow in the footsteps of his family. His mom regularly sold drugs and was incarcerated multiple times over his middle and high school years. After a year or two in, I had some doubts about whether I was making a difference. Marquel was primarily concerned with what I would buy for him or what activities I could provide for him. It wasn't entirely developmentally inappropriate, but it was hard to deal with the demands at times. I questioned whether I should stop, but my wife encouraged me to continue.

As Marquel matured (and as I matured), our

relationship started to grow and blossom. He opened up to me more and we talked about more and more of his life. Sometimes we would go out and talk for hours. He leaned on me and asked for my advice and input. He was not suspended during his whole high school tenure.

He graduated with distinction from Fulton High School in May 2016 and will be attending MTSU this fall, majoring in business. He received enough through a Project Grad scholarship, Pell grants lottery scholarship and MTSU scholarship, that nearly all of his school will be paid for. I was honored to help him through the process of studying for his college entrance exams, apply for colleges, making campus visits and even being at MTSU for his first day of classes.

He has compassion for his family, but wants to choose a different path. He still can't beat me in basketball, but he tops in me courage, resilience, and maturity. I cried at his graduation and I cried when I dropped him off to college.

He has moved beyond a mentee, and he is now simply my friend.

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NORM & BRYLIN



Norm & Brylin: Matched on October 1, 2010

My journey with Brylin began over six years ago. Brylin was nine years old. He has a twin sister, as do I. Brylin is left handed. So am I. Other than video games, we seem to enjoy a lot of the same things. He has helped me discover the joy of football. The Vols are frequently talked about as Brylin loves football and following the Vols!

Brylin's family has moved about four times during our mentoring relationship, and Brylin has changed schools with each move. Although we do not talk about him very often, it is my understanding Brylin's dad has been in and out of jail/prison several times since our mentoring friendship began. His dad is currently out of jail and I am trying to be sensitive to their father-son relationship.

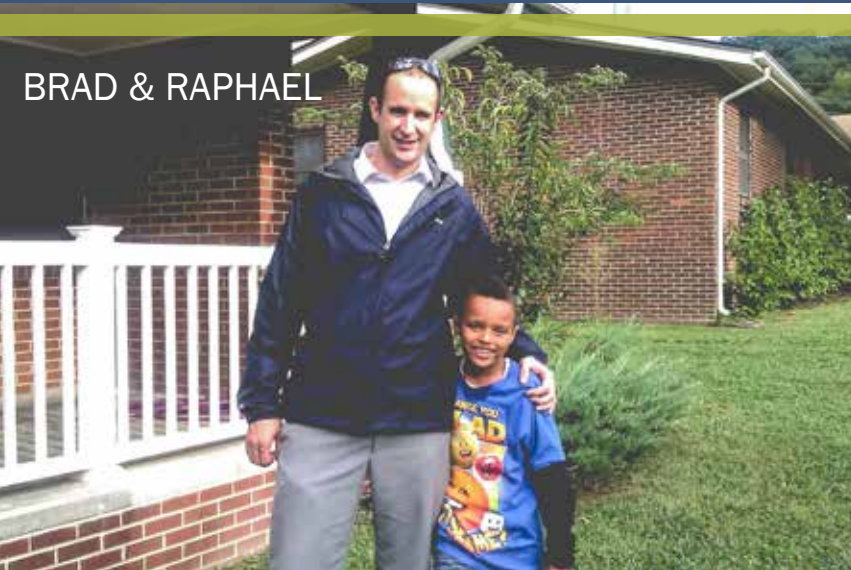
Over the last six years our activities have changed as well. We try to mix it up. Shooting hoops, playing disc golf, hiking, Christmas parades, touring museums or just hanging out are a few of our favorite things to do. We even hiked House Mountain!

In middle school, Brylin got into some trouble at school and was suspended. We talked through the choices he had made and how he could have done things differently. Last year, he started at Fulton High School. He was scared, and we talked quite a bit about this at the start of the school year. Things are better and he says he is doing well as he continues to get good grades. One conversation was regarding Treyvon Martin, Ferguson, University of Missouri and racism. It was great to hear him expressing his opinions and listening to mine.

As I have attempted to make a positive impact, share faith and provide some stability in Brylin's life, he has had an impact on mine. Being a husband to a beautiful wife and father of two beautiful girls, I enjoy our "guy time". We laugh a lot and enjoy being together in whatever "guy" activity we might be doing.

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BRAD & RAPHAEL



Brad & Raphael: Matched on October 1, 2012

Brad grew up without a father in his life and understands the negative impact it can have on a young man. His main motivation in becoming a mentor was to be a positive male role model, and show a young man that he can persevere and become anything he wants to be, in spite of his circumstances.

Brad is an approved school contact and communicates frequently with Raphael's teachers. In the two years Brad has been Raphael's mentor, Raphael's school performance has significantly improved. Brad has helped Raphael develop an interest in reading. Since Raphael likes comic books and super heroes, Brad found a comic book series that features African American superheroes that he bought for Raphael. He has offered an incentive if Raphael completes the series - and Raphael is almost there. Brad has begun to talk to Raphael about college and what type of career he may want to pursue.

His family has struggled with periodic homelessness and Raphael has had disciplinary issues and made poor choices in friends. According to his teacher, "He's embarrassed and insecure about being homeless and having to frequently move." Although Raphael's precarious living arrangements have been the source of stress and instability in his life, Brad is a consistent, caring presence he can count on. When Raphael's family was evicted, his teacher shared encouraging news, "even though he's been struggling with self-doubt and general insecurity, he is still doing really well. He was one of only four kids out of 40 that scored 100 percent on a fractions test. I'm really proud of him."

Brad continues to encourage Raphael to stay positive, show respect to his teachers and choose better friends.

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KATIE & REESE



Katie & Reese Matched on June 8, 2009

Amachi Knoxville matched Katie and Reese in 2009 when Reese was 11 and Katie 19. In the beginning, Reese was very withdrawn and reluctant to talk to Katie about anything personal. Katie just kept showing up and gave Reese time and space to trust her. They spent many hours in companionable silence, cooking, doing homework, and reading. Katie helped Reese study for the ACT, look into colleges, work to get her driver's license and find an internship.

Throughout high school, Reese was in the Spanish Honors Society, excelled in math and pushed herself to make straight A's every semester. She never had disciplinary issues or skipped school. In 2015 she was chosen by her principal as the school ambassador to meet Governor Haslam. As a senior, she was dual enrolled at Pellissippi State Community College and completed four college courses. She is now a full-time student at Pellissippi, and plans to study abroad in the future and to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Engineering at the University of Tennessee.

Katie describes Reese as "a very beautiful,

talented, smart and courteous young lady." She feels fortunate to have been able to support Reese through some life struggles such as her having limited contact with her incarcerated father and little time with her brother who was stationed in South Korea. However, Katie is quick to say that she has benefited from their relationship as least as much as Reese has.

Reese started sharing about her dream to one day be an Amachi mentor with Katie. Katie would ask her from time to time about it and Reese would say the same thing, "I'm not ready yet." Reese is now nineteen and during a recent conversation on a hiking trip with Katie, she shared, "I'm the same age you were when we were matched." Katie said she could tell something had changed and sensed that Reese was doing a lot of serious reflection on their special relationship over the last 7 ½ years. Reese recently reached out to Amachi to let us know she's interested in taking the next steps to become a mentor herself. What a testament to the life-long impact mentoring has on not only the mentees but our amazing mentors!

MENTORING STORIES OF IMPACT

WHITNEY & ALASIA



Whitney & Alasia: Matched on January 6, 2015

Whitney had a mentor growing up and shares it saved her life. Her mentor, Suzanne, taught her Scripture and how to cook, but most importantly, Suzanne taught her to love herself and have more confidence. When Whitney heard about Amachi, she knew this was God giving her the opportunity to pour into someone's life the way Suzanne poured into hers.

Some of their outings have included camping, hiking, swimming, trips to Dollywood and the zoo, etc. "My favorite trip with Alasia was in June, when we took her to Emerald Isle, NC to the beach and to spend the weekend with my mentor, Suzanne. I can't fully express how special it was to see my mentor and my mentee meeting each other and observing my mentor pour love over Alasia. It was such a humbling and special experience."

"Amachi has been such a blessing to our household and to me personally. This experience has changed my life and has blessed me immensely! I hope that God has used me to instill truth and hope to Alasia -but honestly- she has taught me so much! She has taught me to be joyous in all circumstances and to make the best out of every situation. She has taught me to laugh as much as you can. She has taught me how to be "cool". Alasia is such a joy and I am so honored to have her in my life."