



GRADUATES



Committed to Excellence



The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Newsletter.

June 27, 2019



DYRS Graduation Keynote Speaker and Graduate Shares His Story



Five high schools and one college degree later, post-committed youth Rufus shared his story of hope and perseverance as the keynote speaker at the Stars in the Making Graduation hosted by the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) at The Arc on Thursday, June 20th.

The Clark Atlanta University graduate earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice and Sociology. He accepted a Peabody Award for a produced documentary: "180 Days," received a "Youth on The Rise Award," and a DC Mayor Muriel Bowser Right Direction Award. Prior to his hard-earned accomplishments, Rufus weathered such challenges as having to grow up with his father in prison as well as economic and housing instability after the death of his mother in 2011. After being committed to DYRS on the heels of some self-described wrong turns the following year, Rufus redoubled his efforts to create the life that he wanted for himself.

He explained how his life changed forever after attending a college tour of Clark Atlanta University. It was the farthest he had ever been from Washington, DC, but he immediately knew it was the school for him. Fast-forward to May 2019, and not only did Rufus cross the stage in Atlanta, he was the keynote speaker at the ceremony celebrating DYRS' 2019 graduates.

"I've been you, perhaps worse than you. Like you, I couldn't see the path forward," he said. "My path has been tough and there are still challenges along the way. But, I'm here to tell you that it's possible move forward."

Next up, Rufus plans to become more deeply involved with at-risk youth with the hopes of using his first-person experience to address the needs of court-involved youth. Click here to listen to Rufus discuss his plans and more on a recent episode of Led by Love.

Stars in the Making

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) hosted its 3rd annual graduation ceremony for committed youth in the community, themed Stars in the Making. Held at THEARC on Thursday, June 20th, the ceremony celebrated a number of youth who graduated from high school and earned a GED this year.

Undeterred by previous challenges, the graduates include an aspiring nurse, firefighter, mortician as well as college-bound youths Shamelen and Giovanni, who will both attend Virginia State University, and Simone, who will attend the University of the District of Columbia. Rufus, a 2019 graduate of Clark Atlanta University was the keynote speaker.

All of the graduates were presented with gift bags, certificates, and a celebratory dinner. DYRS Chief of Staff Adam Aljoburi delivered opening remarks welcoming the guests and graduates and DYRS Youth Engagement Specialist Rendell Keith, gave closing well wishes. DYRS Director Clinton Lacey shared commendations with his message and encouraged the graduates to be role models and leaders within their community to their peers and younger children and youth.

New Beginnings Maya Angelou Graduation

DYRS Director Clinton Lacey opened the Maya Angelou Academy Graduation Ceremony at the New Beginnings Youth Development Center with powerful remarks to the graduating youth before their families, teachers, and credible messengers on Tuesday, June 11th.

Director Lacey shared that graduating from high school is a special accomplishment and encouraged them to "not to let the current circumstances define who you are becoming." Educators then took to the stage to reflect on the young people's growth and maturity over the past school year.

Youth also got the opportunity to speak about their own journeys towards graduating high school and earning their diplomas. Youth and families enjoyed taking pictures and a dinner reception following the ceremony, where they were given the opportunity to mingle with teachers and mentors. DYRS is proud to congratulate the Maya Angelou Academy Class of 2019 for their hard work and commitment and wish them all continued triumph in the future!



★ ★ ★ DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES ★ ★ ★

For questions or submissions for future issues, please contact dyrs.media@dc.gov



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OUR

stars

in the making



20

19

Academic Achievement Celebration

Rufus

Troy

Do what you want

Kenny

and not what you can. ASPIRES

Marquell

Simone

TO BECOME A FIREFIGHTER. THE MOST

Koran

Bernard

BENEFICIAL THING WAS GETTING

Jamal

Jercail

Amaru

SUPPORT FROM DYRS. Never say you

Alexis

can't because you always can. Going to

Daquan

James

U DC then transferring to a different

Jaward

Keondre

college. My favorite activity was when we

Sade

went to Colorado. Live everyday like it's

Tahji

Deamonte

your last. Aspires to become a mortician. Musical

Javonni

Arts Program. Best part about working with

Shamelen

Clarence

DYRS: My social worker and mentor. ASPIRE TO

Kevon

Demarco

BE GREAT. Post-grad plans are to work

Travis

and continue school. THE INTEGRITY

Stephon

PROGRAM WAS THE MOST BENEFICIAL.

Nathaniel

Antonio

Never give up. Nursing school in the fall.