

What the Boys & Girls Club Means to Me

By Cody Henderson

Good morning everyone. My name is Cody Henderson. I want to start off by saying, thank you so much for having me here this morning. I am not a perfect person. I have been through numerous situations. I have been detained inside of a detention center for many wrong behaviors; I have been characterized with many labels such as criminal, disrespectful, and deceitful. To top it all off my home life was stressful. My mom started to get sick and it created new challenges for me. People have told me I will never be anything in life. They've also said I don't belong on this earth. I felt like it was all true at one point. I was lost, confused, and misunderstood. Every day was a constant battle of trying to be the person I wanted to be or being the person that people assumed I was. That all changed when I felt I became a part of the Boys & Girls Club family.

When I first came to the club, Ms. DeLauren came to me with open arms willing to talk about anything. This was a place where I could learn there were rules and expectations, but after a while I began to realize that Mrs. Burwell was teaching me to be accountable and respectful. To be honest, I still wasn't making the right choices outside of the club, but Ms. DeLauren and I got really close. Through this process I began to be more open and I started talking to her about my personal life. She guided me to be the better person I am today. In the summer, I began to gain more freedom and trust from her and many other staff members. A lot of times the kids came to me with a lot of their problems and looked to me to help them solve it. It was important to me that I let them know violence was never the answer. This Boys & Girls Club is a safe environment to keep us off the streets. I am heading down the right path because of this club. Ms. DeLauren has given me many opportunities to prove myself, to show me that I am capable of anything, and has even allowed me to become a junior staff. I have had the opportunity to share many stories with other members in Passport to Manhood and it's clear to see that I am becoming an important part in their lives. This warms my heart to see the kids off the streets and heading down the right path. It is my personal goal to be a positive example to all the kids that walk through the club doors, the same way that Ms. DeLauren has been a positive example in my life. I can honestly say that because of the Boys & Girls Club, I feel that I matter and have a purpose on this earth.

Today and every day I am working on becoming the best role model that I can be. I am currently a freshman at Granville Central High School. In four years I want to graduate high school and attend college. I hope to attend Clemson University and pursue a degree in engineering and potentially be a college athlete. I feel that this is all possible for me because of coming to the Boys & Girls Club. My grades have improved, and I have goals for myself. I have also achieved goals since I have become a club member. I don't want to live on the street, go to jail, surround myself with drugs, or live a life I can't be proud of. I want to make my parents mile on the day I walk across the stage. I want to raise a family of my own, have a job, and live the right way. The Boys & Girls Club has helped me in many ways through this long, tough journey of tears, sweat, and blood. It's been a challenge, but I hope to continue facing the challenges of life and become a successful person. I can't picture myself behind bars or living on the street because my whole idea of life has changed. My mom once told me that life is too short to just sit there and do nothing. With the support of my parents and the Boys & Girls Club, I know there isn't anything I can't do. Thank you so much for your time; it has been an honor to share my story with you.