



**ONE OF A KIND** Marshall Janifer at the groundbreaking of the student-built house in 2010.

## THE LEGACY OF MARSHALL JANIFER: An Extraordinary Teacher

The untimely death of Marshall Janifer in January 2014 left a hole in the hearts of students and colleagues alike at the Cardozo Education Campus in Washington, D.C., where he was lead carpentry instructor for more than 25 years.

By Carol Randolph

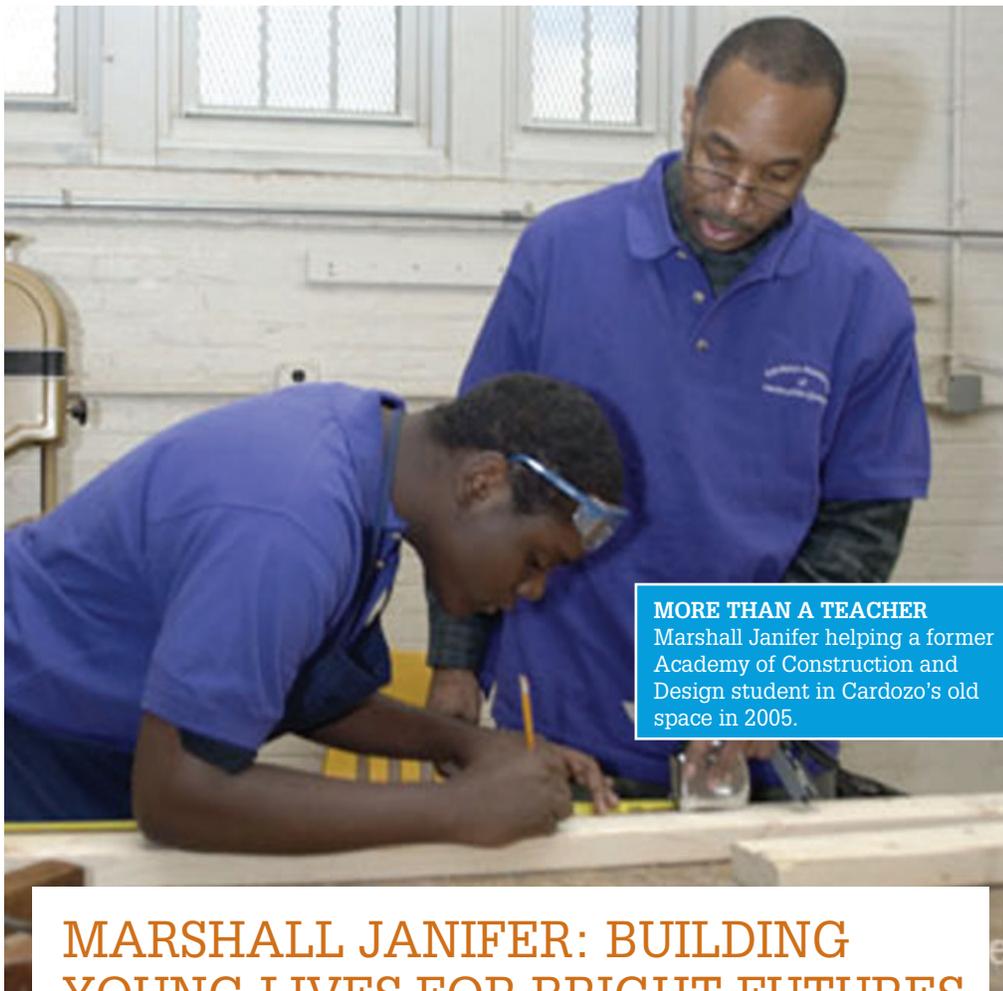
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## MAKING STRIDES: JOBS COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS



While raising awareness of workforce challenges and potential barriers to employment, the JOBS Coalition and its members have combined their resources and industry expertise to achieve the following results:

- Built the Bellevue Resource Center, a program facility serving the hard-to-reach, hard-to-employ, and returning ex-offender populations. The Center was completed on September 30, 2003.
- Guided the creation of the Construction & Design Academy at Cardozo, providing District students access, training, and preparation for careers in the construction industry and trades after graduation. The Academy officially opened in September 2005. □



**MORE THAN A TEACHER** Marshall Janifer helping a former Academy of Construction and Design student in Cardozo's old space in 2005.

## MARSHALL JANIFER: BUILDING YOUNG LIVES FOR BRIGHT FUTURES

By Arnesa A. Howell

A man to remember, Marshall Janifer had always been dedicated to the success of his students. He pushed them to go to college, to not give up on themselves and to be stewards of their communities. As the lead carpentry instructor at the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD) at Cardozo Education Campus, Janifer encountered students from many walks of life. And when he saw promise in his young charges, he took it upon himself to help them move forward and build a brighter future for themselves. Janifer saw potential in students like Freddy Possian, 24, a 2009 graduate of the Academy of Construction and Design. Today, Possian is a double major (international business and marketing) and double minor (civic and community engagement, and international studies) at Penn State University.

The same pride Janifer had in his students is now reflected in graduates like Possian. “Just like the way he was proud, it’s kind of a pride

for me like being a big brother of the program to see other people graduating from that program,” he says of returning to the graduation ceremony at the Meet the Future awards luncheon, where he earlier received a Norman Dreyfuss scholarship. At that same luncheon last year, Janifer was honored with a \$10,000 gift for his commitment and dedication to his craft and the students whose lives he helped to shape.

On Jan. 11, students, friends and family shared their memories – and bid their final farewells – to one of Washington, D.C.’s native sons, who died suddenly on Jan. 5.

Janifer was a coach, teacher and mentor for tennis, carpentry – and life, shared Possian as he remembered the man who urged him to give back to the community. It’s a reason Possian is pursuing civic and community engagement as one of his minors in college.

As Janifer urged his students to pursue

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## Janifer Legacy *Continued from page 1*

**W**hile his absence is deeply felt, he leaves an enduring legacy in the Academy of Construction and Design, the career and technical education (CTE) program he helped launch in 2005.

More than a decade ago, a group of concerned community leaders – led by John McMahon, chairman of Miller and Long Concrete Construction Company – set out to do what seemed the impossible: restoring skilled trades vocational education in D.C. Public Schools by establishing a construction academy. The odds were against us. Vocational education, if acknowledged at all by school officials, had been placed among DCPS’ lowest priorities. In seeking to change this way of thinking and establish a state-of-the-art career and technical education facility, we encountered formidable challenges: finding a location for the academy; financing the project; and convincing students (and more than a few educators) that skilled trades CTE provides solid pathways to real careers. Through CTE, students are given viable alternatives to college and a way to pay for a higher education while employed in the industry.

After years of testifying before the D.C. Council and the Board of Education, and a series of extensive talks with school officials, we began to gain support for the idea. A breakthrough came when Reginald Ballard, then principal of Cardozo Senior High School, agreed to provide instructional space for the Academy and assigned the school’s carpentry instructor, Marshall Janifer, to assist. From the start, it was clear that in his quiet and unassuming way, this veteran teacher would play a pivotal role in implementing the new skilled trades curriculum.

With a home for the program, we moved forward to attract funding to install new classrooms and training labs, and hired a director to get the Academy up and running. It was Janifer – or “Mr. J” as he was affectionately called by students and staff – who made many of our teaching goals a reality. His motto, “I’ve got this,” became the foundation of projects many naysayers thought would never come to fruition, including the Academy’s student-built house and hands-on training opportunities for carpentry and electrical students as part of the recently completed Cardozo school renovation. Not once did Janifer ever say that something was impossible for the students.

An exceptional teacher, Janifer always had the energy to lend extra help to troubled students. In his classes, students learned the importance of fractions and geometry in the skilled trades, the significance of listening and following directions when handling construction equipment, and the benefits of teamwork. They also learned the value of

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## REFLECTIONS



**SHELLY KARRIEM, DIRECTOR, ACADEMY OF CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN AT CARDOZO EDUCATION CAMPUS**

**JOBS:** What is your fondest memory of Mr. Janifer?

**Karriem:** Looking at Mr. Janifer’s life, one of the most memorable ones is when we honored him last year at the Meet the Future luncheon. Mr. Janifer was a man who didn’t have a lot of words publicly. When he talked, he talked to small groups and 1-on-1. He was never at a loss for words, he just was never a man of many words. When we did that “I gotcha” moment [at the luncheon], he was standing there completely lost for words. I feel so blessed standing here today because we gave him his roses when he was still alive; when he could still smell them. That means a lot to me. That was the icing on the cake ... the fondest memory.

**JOBS:** What is something that is uniquely Janifer?

**Karriem:** I got it. That was him. Me and Mr. Janifer had a true partnership. I’m here [Cardozo] morning, noon and night. And he would look at me sometimes and say, “You know what? You need to go home.” And I’d say, “Mr. Janifer, I’ve got so much to do.” He would look at me and say, “Ms. Karriem, I got this.” And that was it. And the kids, they use it, “I got this.” So, that was him.



**JERMAINE BROWN, CARPENTRY STUDENT AND 10TH GRADER, ACADEMY OF CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN**

**JOBS:** What is your fondest memory of Mr. Janifer?

**Brown:** When he had speeches about how I can be a good person.

**JOBS:** Is that something you found was unique for a teacher to do?

**Brown:** Yeah, I have experienced it [before] but I really think he meant it. Other teachers said it just to get you to do the right thing, but I think he meant it. Because every time I did something wrong, he’ll tell me I shouldn’t be doing that ‘cause I can make something better of myself. Or, I look like a good person and I can succeed.

**JOBS:** What impact is that going to have on your life now?

**Brown:** I will try my hardest to succeed. I will succeed because he pushed me and made me succeed in class and made me become a better person in school. He was my favorite teacher.

**JOBS:** What is something that is uniquely Janifer?

**Brown:** He made class fun. I used to like going to his class every day. Now, class is not the same without him. Every week we used to build something different, and it was fun.



**RICHARD LAWRENCE, FORMER COLLEAGUE AND ELECTRICAL INSTRUCTOR, ACADEMY OF CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN**

**JOBS:** What is your fondest memory of Mr. Janifer, personally and professionally?

**Lawrence:** I worked with him for about five years. And he was directly responsible for helping me get through my first few years of teaching.

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Personally, he was an all-around good guy. So often now we hear in the news about the bad stuff that's going on, and nobody writes about the good stuff. And he was a force in the D.C. school system that cannot be replaced. He made a real impact with his students and he tried really hard to do his job every day faithfully, no matter what. He really did a great job.

**JOBS:** What made him so unique in the teaching

profession?

**Lawrence:** He got the kids. He understood at their level what they were dealing with, and he tried to reach those kids at their level and develop a real relationship with them. Generally, that long after high school you don't have kids coming back. While I was here, there were students coming back who were students of his 10 years earlier. And they just kept coming back and visiting him because he made such an impact on them.



## FREDDY POSSIAN, FORMER CARPENTRY STUDENT AND 2009 GRADUATE, ACADEMY OF CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN

**JOBS:** What is your fondest memory of Mr. Janifer?

**Possian:** A funny memory of him? He would always tell me to stop fussin' every time I was doing something. He was also my tennis coach, so every time he made me do something like serve the ball, I would complain about it. And he would say, "Stop fussin'," so that's one of the biggest memories I have of him. The second one is try to help your community. So, that's why I was saying civic and community engagement is my minor [at Penn State University] because I'm trying to help my community. And the third thing:

The main thing he taught me was self-confidence and how to be strong. I was very shy when I got here.

**JOBS:** What's something that's uniquely Janifer?

**Possian:** Mr. Janifer. I would say straight-up, open-hearted person. You don't want to get him mad, though. He doesn't get mad, but if he does, oh my gosh, you want to get away from him. He was a nice person. He pushed a lot of students. There were a lot of knuckleheads – that's his word, knucklehead – or those crazy kids ... but he still went after those knuckleheads. That's one of his things: He doesn't give up [on them] when other teachers just give up and say, "I'm done with you." He was very persistent in trying to change people for the better.

**JOBS:** What impact did he have on you?

**Possian:** When I first came here, my parents brought me here to Cardozo. First day, I just went and saw that they had carpentry. I asked him, "Can I do carpentry?" and he said, "Yeah." I thought because of my English, I could not do it. And he said, "If this tool is the same thing in French, you don't need to know the name to use it." I was like, "Wow," that's the first thing that hit me. You don't need English to be a carpenter. If you know how to use a tool, then that's about it. And the way he took care of people around him. He used to take his van and drive people around. When he was the tennis coach, we didn't have a way to transport us, so he would take his own van, pay his own gas – going out of his own way to try and help the students, try to help the community. It pushed me to what I can do to try to keep that legacy and be a better man like he is.



## KRYSTAL BOONE, FORMER CARPENTRY STUDENT AND 2010 GRADUATE, CARDOZO ACADEMY OF CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN

**JOBS:** What is your fondest memory of Mr. Janifer?

**Boone:** There were many times when I was going off to school and every day I would come in and he was like, "You gonna print some more applications? You got some more applications to print? Did you fill them out? Did you send them? Did you mail them?" And I was like, "Uncle Jan, I got it," because that's what I called him because the Academy was like a family. At least during my year in 2010, we all were like family. We called each other brother, sister. We had Ms. [Karriem] as our mom ... and he was my Uncle Jan. He was always so happy, nice and sweet and every time I would come in, "Uncle Jan," he was like, "Hey, what's going on? How is school? How's life?"

He cared. I liked not just how he interacted with me, but how he interacted with many other students. Many students come from broken homes and ... he was a father figure. He was that male role model. You don't have many positive male role models all-around – his whole life, his whole legacy, everything that he did and everything that he said was a representation of the man that he was and the men who came through the Academy.

He never talked about himself. Everybody talks about how he was honored last year and how if he knew he was going to be honored, he probably wouldn't have shown up. That's the type of man he was. He didn't do it for the praise, he didn't do it for the awards, the money, the certificates. He did it out of the kindness of his heart to do good things for good people or even good things for bad people. Like they said at the funeral, you think of a man who was a teacher and a carpenter, and that was him. He pushed many of us to go to college to further our education.

**JOBS:** What's something that's uniquely Janifer?

**Boone:** You got this. That's his signature. □

## JOBS Coalition Pathways

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## Janifer Legacy *Continued from page 2*

being responsible in order to create a safe working environment in the classroom and during field projects. These are the daily lessons he instilled while teaching the craft of carpentry.

Outside the classroom – sometimes late after school and on Saturdays – he coached students in tennis and chess, offering guidance and advice to those who needed it. He found ways to transport students who were going to college but had no way to get to campus. It was because of his tremendous dedication to the students and the Academy that the D.C. Students Construction Trade Foundation honored him at its annual Meet the Future luncheon in May 2013. At that event, McMahon called Janifer the “glue” to the Academy while colleague Shelly Karriem praised him for being the “father to so many fatherless young people.”

We now live in an age where a teacher’s worth is measured by impersonal numbers from standardized test scores instead of the impact on students’ lives. We hear too little about those skills

and qualities that are so necessary for students to succeed in life, such as timeliness, being respectful and responsible for oneself and to others, and learning how to work effectively as part of a team. These were the skills that Janifer taught his students both inside – and outside – the classroom. Undoubtedly, this is why so many students, parents and colleagues attended a funeral service to pay tribute to the man and educator whom they felt was irreplaceable.

The Academy of Construction and Design will continue the legacy of Marshall Janifer, who often said his proudest achievement was motivating students to become decent human beings and successful adults. His example is the true measure of a good teacher. Janifer will be deeply missed and never forgotten. □

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*Carol Randolph, chief operations officer for the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, is co-founder of the Academy of Construction and Design at Cardozo Education Campus.*

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academic excellence, his family did the same for him. Janifer told *JOBS Coalition Pathways* in 2007 that he reluctantly attended Virginia State University at the nudging of his parents. And he got his first teaching job at Sharpe Health School where he taught industrial art and woodworking to physically challenged students at the urging of his uncle, who worked in the city’s public school system at the time. It would be the start of the journey that would eventually lead him to Cardozo.

At Cardozo, he shared his passion for carpentry, which was ignited when he was a child watching his father build the basement in the family’s Washington, D.C. home. “I’d go down and watch what he was doing,” Janifer recalled at the time about his dad, who he called a “jack-of-all-trades.” That spark for working with his hands would stay with him for the rest of his life.

Janifer made an impact at every level of the program, building a strong foundation through the students in whom he believed. Said John McMahon, chairman of Miller and Long Concrete Construction, in praising the man who touched the lives of so many: “Marshall Janifer was the quiet glue in our entire program. And he was the heart and soul of our program. Because of Marshall Janifer, [many ACAD graduates] are in college, graduated from college and they’re successful.” □

## JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

**W**e will work together to develop a long-term strategy that creates an environment where aspiring District residents will have unprecedented opportunity to succeed. We strive to create a fair and open system, supported by government, industry, employers and the education and faith-based communities, which seeks to properly train today’s apprentices while making an unparalleled commitment to educating students and others not yet in the workforce.

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