



DREAM CATCHER Former NFLer Fred Smoot

'LIVE THE DREAM'

For prospects at the NFL combine, it's about proving oneself mentally and physically on the road to the draft. Speed, performance and mental acuity – all carefully measured. But at the 11th Annual Meet the Future Luncheon, there was a different kind of demonstration with a different type of talent: students of the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD) at IDEA Public Charter School.

By Arnesa A. Howell

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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. □



SCHOLASTIC POWERHOUSE
The scholars of the Academy of Construction and Design at IDEA with supporters and staff.

MEET THE FUTURE 2017 Academy Students Praise CTE Program for Teaching Respect, Self Confidence & Commitment

As new high school graduates, young people expect advice: Work hard. Make the most of your opportunities. Stay focused. But as the Class of 2017 prepared to become alumni of the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD), one word resonated above the rest: passion.

By Arnesa A. Howell

“You gotta know what you want to achieve and how to get there. It takes passion,” said Fred Smoot, former cornerback for the Washington Redskins, at the 11th Annual Meet the Future Luncheon on May 12 at The Hamilton in Washington, D.C. As he strode back and forth across the stage, Smoot reflected on his past challenges and offered guidance to the graduating seniors and underclassmen gathered for this year’s awards ceremony. The soon-to-be former students of the Academy took note.

Graduating senior Joshua Rice smiled broadly as he shared that this fall he will be enrolling in Coppin State University in Baltimore, Md., where he plans to pursue studies in criminal justice. He focused on architectural design at the Academy, and urged incoming students to be enthusiastic about the program and the skills they would be learning.

“You have to have a passion for it,” said Rice, clutching an award he won during the ceremony. “And you have to love it before you do it.”

Stick-to-it-ness is what brought Rice and his fellow graduates to this day, when they and

underclassmen were honored for academic achievement, personal character and leadership. This marks the second year for the program at IDEA Public Charter School and 11 years for the Meet the Future luncheon, hosted by the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation (DCSCTF). The training program has been lauded for teaching young people skills in carpentry and other skilled trades used in construction, as well as incorporating training in landscaping and architectural design.

“College is not always the next right step for each of our scholars. I am pleased that they have the example of the construction trades as a route to post-secondary access,” said Justin Rydstrom, head of school at IDEA.

He said students have consistently expressed enthusiasm over meeting and working with the trades people who lead the Academy. “As an educator, I’m thrilled to see how excited our students are with hands-on learning and meeting people who are making a good living with these skills,” Rydstrom said.

Meanwhile, Justin Sullivan, chairman of this year’s luncheon and president of Impact Con-

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“It reminds me of the NFL combine but it’s the construction combine right now,” said guest speaker Fred Smoot, former cornerback for the Washington Redskins, in a nod to the building industry professionals gathered to check out the up-and-comers from the ACAD program. “Y’all come here to see the youth, to see the talent and see who’s next in your field.”

In talking about the future, Smoot took the opportunity to reflect on his childhood in Jackson, Mississippi, which he said is nothing like that of his own kids growing up in a big house in Ashburn, Virginia. The schools, opportunities and even games are nothing alike. “We played marbles, jacks, pogo sticks,” Smoot said. “Switch the page, and the youth [today] have touch screen phones and high-tech everything.”

Still, one difference that stood out, one that he found himself pondering with a best friend, who is also a former teammate: Why aren’t our kids good in football?

The answer: “The hunger is just not there.”

Secret to Success

To the students of the Academy, Smoot said taking steps to succeed in the future means that you must “truly, truly, truly want it.”

“If you don’t want it and you don’t believe in yourself, you don’t have a chance,” he stated firmly to the audience, which included a mix of Millennials, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers.

He pointed out that sometimes as we age, it can be challenging to look ahead. But looking out onto the Meet the Future audience, he was seeing no signs of that. “I think that’s what y’all are doing in here. Y’all are embracing what’s next. And what’s next is these young people,” he said. “They are gonna be filling your seats one day, doing the same thing for a new generation.”

But Smoot also shared some true – albeit lighter – moments. Growing up, he remembered a friend’s father who owned a construction company and had seven sons. “He knew all of us played football,” Smoot said. “If you own a construction company and you have seven boys, it’s called free labor.”

The audience laughed appreciatively.

Passion & Purpose

The students in the Academy will ultimately pursue their own paths – some to college, others straight into the workforce. Smoot acknowledged that not everyone’s journey is the same. “College ain’t gonna be for everybody. Building ain’t gonna be for everybody,” he said, noting that passion is a key to reaching one’s goal. “But the first step is to be around people like this who can

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STUDENT PRIDE (Clockwise) Senior Steve Cheuko snags the Norman Dreyfuss Scholarship; Bright Futures Boot Camp winners Kayla Fleming and Richard Boller; and (l-r) Miller & Long’s John McMahon applauds Marshall Janifer Outstanding Student Award winner Chloe McLean, with ACAD Director Shelly Karriem.

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struction and Consulting, touted the importance of the Academy, urging professionals in the room to “enable our teachers and administrators at ACAD to grow this program so that these young men and women can sustain our future.”

Paving the Way

Surrounded by industry leaders across construction, architecture and skilled trades contracting, students were at the heart of the annual luncheon. Early in the event, a video montage showcased ACAD students interacting with middle schoolers, sharing their hopes and dreams for the future, and reflecting on the unique learning experiences offered by the program.

“IDEA is a school that has ACAD as a class where you can learn how to work the tools ... build houses and things that you can use later in life,” said Makiya Johnson, a sophomore enrolled at the Academy.

Current ACAD students also got the chance to introduce the program to younger students like Malachi Holsten who are interested in attending the public charter school in Northeast D.C. “I never got to work with wood, and nails and stuff, because it was a little too dangerous,” Holsten admitted with a hint of excitement. “I learned about three new tools: the compound miter saw ... different types of nails and a staple gun.”

Construction industry leaders were also learning about the next generation to embrace career and technical education. “[This is] an example of younger voices telling older ears what they hope to accomplish,” said Carol Randolph, moderator of the luncheon and chief operating officer of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, in introducing the video.



As part of its ongoing efforts to show District students the “many roads to success,” the Meet the Future luncheon recognized those standout student scholars across all classes – who were either graduating in 2017 or continuing their specialized studies within the Academy the next academic school year – with a series of awards and prizes.

Scholarly Moments

The Norman Dreyfuss Scholarship fund, named after the COO and executive vice president of the IDI Group Companies, has awarded more than \$52,000 since 2009. Norman Dreyfuss also serves as a D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation Executive Council member.

This year’s winner of the Norman Dreyfuss Scholarship was Steve Cheuko, a graduating senior who in 2016 took special honors during the ceremony for his academics and leadership. In announcing the winner, the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation Program Director Beth Moore praised Cheuko for being a “focused, industrious and self-confident honor

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MAGNIFICENT 'SIGAL' SEVEN All classes pick up honors as Sigal Scholars.



GOLDEN MOMENTS
Miller & Long Chairman John McMahon receives surprise gift from ACAD students; scholars take last walk of academic year.



Meet the Future 2017 *Continued from page 2* roll student who takes pride in his work.” The scholarship came with a \$2,000 award, which Cheuko plans to use for college.

“I will pay for my tuition and books,” said Cheuko, 19, who has been accepted to George Mason University in Virginia. “Computer science – that is the major that I’m looking forward to.”

He credited the Academy for teaching him the benefits of hard work, perseverance and respect. And academically, he is looking forward to merging the architectural design and software

skills honed at ACAD with the newfound skills he expects to learn as a computer science major.

Still, he acknowledged that college isn’t the path for everyone. That is the value in the alternatives offered by the Academy, where there is an emphasis on construction as a career option. “Construction [programs] should be implemented in all of the high schools in Washington, D.C.,” Cheuko stressed. “If you want to go into construction, you have to be ready, you have to [be] on time ... and be hard working.”

‘Sigal’ Seven

Seven students across four classes – freshman through senior – received accolades from the Sigal Family Foundation, endowed in 2013. They were honored for being “outstanding” students who “exhibit character, quiet competence, good citizenship and competitive spirit, and the drive to meet every challenge,” said Shelly Karriem, director of the Academy of Construction and Design at IDEA.

The 2017 Sigal Scholar Award winners were freshmen Raven Carter and Khari Lyles, who were awarded laptops; sophomores Kyeon Ford and Makiya Johnson, each awarded \$300 gift cards; and juniors Jarious Gooding and David Flores, who also received laptop computers. Senior

Joshua Rice rounded out the list of winners.

Rice received kudos for having the top attendance in the Bright Futures Bootcamp, a program dedicated to teaching career and life skills as well as essay writing. Karriem pointed out that it was not unusual for him to be sitting on the floor waiting for boot camp to start on Saturday mornings.

“This young man has presented me with so many challenges, even today. He met me at school at 7:15 this morning and I love him so,” Karriem said before announcing Rice, 17, as the senior Sigal Scholar, an honor bestowed with a \$1,000 award. “He has a smile on his face all the time, and he’s a dedicated architectural design student.”

After the ceremony, Rice said he may use the money for his education and is “grateful and happy” for the award.

Building Bright Futures

For the dedicated participants in the Bright Futures Bootcamp, attending weekend workshops and after-school sessions paid off. Scholars Kayla Fleming and Richard Boller – both juniors – each received a \$500 award. “I wasn’t expecting to win,” admitted a surprised Fleming. She said the biggest lesson she learned from the boot camp is the importance of communication.

“If you want to start a business, [communication] is the only way to put yourself out there,” said Fleming, 16, who aspires to pursue nursing with the ultimate goal of becoming a pediatrician and owning her own practice. Talking and networking can help you get a job and learn about opportunities, she added.

Meanwhile, fellow winner Boller is on the construction pathway at the Academy. Already in Construction II, he said that he plans to return to the bootcamp next year to continue skill building – and hopefully, win more awards. In the meantime, the 16-year-old is looking forward to starting an internship at The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum this summer.

The final student award held special significance, as it honored the memory of Marshall Janifer, mentor, coach and longtime carpentry instructor at the Academy of Construction and Design. The 2017 Marshall Janifer Outstanding Student Award recognized the student with the highest GPA, fewest absences and highest participation in ACAD programs. It went to sophomore Chloe McLean, who Moore described as an honor roll student and “fast learner who challenges her teachers’ thinking as much as they challenged hers.”

The award of a laptop proved fitting for a young woman who, according to Moore, has the future makings of becoming a “phenomenal” teacher herself.

Innovator & Pathway Creator

John McMahon, president and co-founder of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation,

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JOBS Coalition Pathways

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change your life.”

These changemakers at Meet the Future are industry leaders across the construction industry, from builders and landscapers to architectural design firms and a laundry list of contractors.

Smoot quipped that when he joined the Redskins, “I had the oldest football team in America.” But these were veteran players who demanded respect. Like any first job, there was an adjustment period. He recalled that rookie year didn’t look good: “You come in, you think you’re fly, you’ve done nothing.” Still, Smoot worked hard – as he urged students to do in the world – to make it because it’s a competition. His goal: “I really, really love you, but I want your job.”

After leaving the game, it was time to discover a new purpose: “I know how to talk and I love to talk.” So, he started making the rounds to TV and radio stations. “Actors, singers, sports athletes, they are temp jobs. What y’all have are permanent careers,” Smoot emphasized.

While he didn’t specifically address personal challenges faced during his career (like the high-profile “Love Boat” scandal more than a decade ago during his stint as a Minnesota Viking, and separately, he was found not guilty in 2015 on a domestic assault charge), Smoot did hint as to what he’s learned from those experiences.

He told youth to be ready for “trials and tribu-

lations” because “they’re gonna strengthen you.”

Later during a Q&A session, Smoot was asked about people who questioned some of his off-field problems and how he reinvented himself afterwards.

Smoot responded: “I’m a grandma’s baby. My grandma told me years ago, one thing God didn’t do was make a perfect man. He made all us, flawed. He made all us to the point we gonna make mistakes, and I didn’t let my mistakes define me. I got better from my mistakes, I learned from ‘em... it’s called cheatin’ life. If you ever want to cheat life, talk to anybody ... that’s old. They got a story to tell, good or bad. If you listen to it, you don’t have to go through it.”

‘My grandma told me years ago, one thing God didn’t do was make a perfect man.’

In his final thoughts, Smoot shared that he always had a plan to get out of Mississippi, a place where he saw a lot of struggle and wanted to break away from. That’s what propelled him not only to dream for something more, but to work consistently to achieve it.

“A lot of people like to dream. But a lot of people don’t like to walk the dream during the daytime,” Smoot said. “If you live the dream, the dream will come true.” □

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has long championed bringing career and technical education back to D.C. Public Schools with the creation of the Academy of Construction and Design. Within the program, many students have found pathways to success, underscored by those who have returned to the Academy to share their personal experiences. For the commitment he had made to seeing an idea through to fruition, the Foundation honored McMahon with a special presentation.

“You had an idea, a desire and a commitment to see it through, and without that we would not be here today,” said Moore. For his continuing support, Karriem presented the chairman of Miller & Long Concrete Construction with a customized hard hat signed by all the Academy students. Enclosed in a glass case, the black hat embossed with golden signatures, reflected the imprint he has had on the program.

As the ceremony came to a close, students rallied together to take a final walk to the stage. They took perfectly practiced steps, the processional line curving along the perimeter of the ballroom to the front of the room. Clasped in their hands, flameless candles that lit the way. But this light ceremony signified more than an ending – it symbolized the beginning for these young people of their bright futures ahead. □



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