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Community Service Award Winner gives as good as he gets

Worth the effort

By **Wayne Ford**

wayne.ford@onlineathens.com

As Deryl Bailey sat in his office at the University of Georgia, he shared a memory that will be a definitive part of his life.

Only 6 at the time, he and his 3-year-old brother stood in the doorway of their home and watched as his mother and her friends left for a fishing outing. Nothing unusual.

"We saw her leave," Bailey said, "but we didn't see her come back."

They never would. She drowned.

He and his brother would be in limbo. Their father was only a part of their lives. An uncle, who would go on to become a basketball star in the NBA, offered to adopt him. But the boys' grandparents would have no part of the brothers being

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■ **Deryl Bailey, Ph.D.**, an assistant professor of counseling and human development services in the University of Georgia College of Education, speaks with Chase Street Elementary School fifth-grader Devante Hunter, 10. Devante is a participant in the "Gentlemen on the

separated.

"My grandparents would not allow them to split us up. My grandmother would not let anybody take us, so she officially adopted us," Bailey said. "My grandparents were a big part of my life even when my mother was there, so living with my grandparents was not a major change.

"I am everything I am today because of all the things she did," he added at his office in Aderhold Hall, which houses the College of Education, where he is assistant professor in the department of counseling and human development services.

Recently, he was presented with the Community Service Award from the Athens Area Human Relations Council Inc. Bailey received the award for his work with young students, primarily for youth programs he founded such as Gentlemen on the Move.

This award, as well as his career, could have been a pipe dream, had it not been for the encouragement he received while growing up in the public housing of Durham, N.C. In school, Bailey was an average student.

He easily could have taken a path elsewhere instead of becoming a man who now has a doctorate degree and a career that gives him influence over an untold number of young people.

While his uncle, Charlie Scott, was a basketball star at the University of North Carolina and later the made it to the NBA, Bailey was undersized in high school, but said he still had athletic ability as he ran on the cross-country team.

"Academically, I was one of those average kids. Folks didn't have high expectations of me in school, and so, as a result, I didn't have high expectations for myself, even though that was not the message from my uncles and aunts who always pushed me to make the grade," he said.

After high school, "I was accepted at Campbell University (Buies Creek, N.C.) on the condition I'd come to summer school and make two Cs. I went to summer school and made two Cs exactly what they required," he said.

College proved frightening at first.

"There was all this freedom," he said. "Nobody to force you to go to class, but I knew if I didn't, I wouldn't make the grade, and I'd have to deal with my grandmother when I got home."

Move" program which provides developmental and counseling support for young black students. Bailey heard from a Chase Street teacher that Devante was acting up and told him that he may lose the opportunity to go on an upcoming field trip to the Tennessee Aquarium with other youths.

Allen Sullivan/Staff ■



■ **Deryl Bailey speaking with Devante Hunter about his behavior in school.**

Allen Sullivan/Staff ■

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He also found himself becoming lost in some courses, especially math, where he often had problems in high school.

"It took extra effort by professors who saw the ability and passion for what I wanted to do," he said. Sometimes he'd call an uncle who would talk him through a problem. He also devised a method for studying, which included writing his notes on a blackboard and recording class lectures.

"It felt good to get reports and exams back with good grades," Bailey said. "I can remember going to an exam in my master's program at Campbell and feeling almost overconfident. I couldn't wait for the exam to take place."

Bailey veered his education toward school counseling "because there was so much that a school counselor could have done for me and my brother that they didn't do. We weren't considered cream of the crop."

In high school, most teachers never encouraged or had high expectations of kids from his background.

"Then again, I was a quiet kid, so I didn't get a lot of attention, even negatively," he said.

At Campbell, Bailey said, "I had a professor who loved the subject matter, who loved teaching and it was a challenge for her to get people who had a math phobia to learn it. And plus, she was funny."

Bailey, who spent 10 years as a high school counselor at three high schools, formulated Gentlemen on the Move, which aims to "develop and nurture academic and social excellence."

Bailey's program is geared for kids who want to be involved.

He and his wife, Brad Bailey, who is a teacher at Cedar Shoals High School, have had the Gentlemen on the Move program in Athens for four years now. They have expanded it to include elementary and middle schools, girls and parents.

Volunteers handle classes from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Saturday morning in which the students study math, science and reading, as well as discuss character building.

"Two semesters ago, we had 25 kids, and then we opened it up to the elementary and middle schools, and our numbers went from 25 to 85," he said.

"One myth about black parents that I think my program proves not to be true is that black parents don't care about their kids. We have 20 to 30 parents (who) come to those meetings," he said.

Recently, Bailey was told about one of the students misbehaving in class.

"I went over and sat in his class," he said. "I guarantee you his behavior next week will be a lot different, because he doesn't know when I'll show up."

Bailey said students in the program are expected to do well academically and socially and his presence at the school not only shows that expectation, but it also shows he cares.

"Regardless of where they start, they will (improve) if they stick with the program," he said. "They will do even better if their parents are supportive."

"We have 100 percent retention of the kids the program works for," he said. "Those the program does not work for, they don't hang around very long. They either stop coming or they are suspended."

"On Saturdays, the only thing that matters is we're here for those kids," he said. "It's about studying when nobody else is studying. How many kids do you know who are studying on Saturday mornings from 8:30 to 1 o'clock?" he asked.

In his job at UGA, Bailey emphasizes the importance of guidance counselors in school systems.

"The way to have a greater impact on kids is to train the people (who) do what I love to do," he said. "Counselors play a critical role in the success of kids."

In some schools, the ratio of counselors to students is high; sometimes 500 or 600 to one. So counselors are trained to be advocates for all kids.

"If one kid has a problem, of, say, being bullied, chances are there are others too," he said. "So you attack the problem.

"Counselors will also tell you they spend an X amount of time talking to teachers about some of their struggles with a colleague, an administrator or a kid or a parent."

Bailey and his wife decided not to have children of their own.

"We are both committed to working with a large number of kids," he said.

Bailey feels he has a large indirect impact on children through his work teaching counselors at UGA. And he feels a more direct impact through his youth programs in the community.

"It means something to my family that I am where I am," he said. "They all are a part of my success."

And although Bailey's mother died a long time ago and his grandmother died a few years ago, he said their spirits are always present.

"My mother shows up every time we have a parents meeting. She is one of those parents. My grandmother shows up because she is one of those grandparents."

A man of religious convictions, he believes God put his grandmother in his life along with the others who influenced his decisions.

"There was nothing special about me that got me here, except for the people who are in my life and the things they encouraged me to do, and the things I decided to do," he said.

Bailey's office is lined with books, photographs and mementos. Here he pores over his work. But his real influence is outside the office.

"There is so much potential in our community that goes untapped," he said. "My goal is to unleash as much of that talent as I can."

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