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Student Spotlight

June 2014

McKinley Habersham



As he wraps up his junior year, 17-year-old McKinley Habersham is thriving in his first year at Memorial Day School in Savannah, Ga., a school he is able to attend through a scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation. It's hard to imagine that only a year ago, while still coping with the tragic loss of his father, McKinley was struggling academically and had lost all interest in any future ambitions.

For most of his life, McKinley had done very well in school, including earning a regular spot on his public school's honor roll. However, tragedy struck the Habersham family in 2008, when McKinley's father passed away during the explosion at the Imperial Sugar Factory. McKinley was crushed and while therapy helped him

deal with his emotions, his mother, Latesha Habersham, saw it as the starting point of his dwindling interest and ambition in school.

By the time McKinley reached the ninth grade, he was bringing home grades that were barely enough to pass and his attitude toward school and extracurricular activities became negative. Nothing seem to change the following year either. He lost interest in playing football, a sport that he had loved participating in for as long as his mother could remember. Concerned for her son's wellbeing and future, Latesha took a proactive approach to find a solution, even visiting her son's school to shadow him during his classes. It was then she realized that her son needed a different environment if he were going to overcome this roadblock. She feared that – without intervention – McKinley would continue down a path that would lead to dropping out or further destruction of his future.

At the time, Latesha's daughter was already attending Memorial Day School and had done exceptionally well at the school. She felt that Memorial Day would be able to help McKinley as well – but there was no way she could afford tuition for both children on her limited income. However, the AAA Scholarship Foundation helped to alleviate the financial challenge, and she enrolled McKinley at the school for the 2013-14 school year.

In less than a year, McKinley has greatly improved his grades and he is now enthusiastic about going to school. He has also reignited his passion for football at Memorial Day School, where he serves on the school team and helped them win a state championship this year. The school, through its focus on preparing students for college, has also stirred up his ambitions for his own future. He is actively looking into colleges to attend following graduation, and hopes to play collegiate football and pursue a law degree.

Latesha is proud of all that McKinley has accomplished in this short time, but hearing her son tell her that this year has been one of the best years of his life since his father's passing, bring tears to her eyes.

Latesha adds that she knows from her own family's experience that every school is not for every child. Her oldest son did fantastic at public school and is excelling in college. But sometimes, such as in McKinley's situation, a different academic environment is needed in order for a child to overcome struggles – and even hardships – in school and life.

"Sending my son to Memorial Day School is one of the best decisions I have made," says Latesha. "I would not have been able to financially make this decision without the scholarship program. I am so grateful to the AAA Scholarship Foundation and all those who make it possible for families like mine to truly have a choice in our children's education."

About AAA Scholarship Foundation

The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. The average household income of families accepted to receive scholarships is \$23,559 for a family of four. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child to reverse inadequate learning and/or social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They wish to change their child's learning environment, acquaintances, and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Pennsylvania by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a tax credit (dollar for dollar in Alabama, Arizona, Florida and Georgia and up to 90 percent in Pennsylvania). The AAA Scholarship Foundation is the only 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and approved Scholarship Organization exclusively serving eligible, low-income children through these Scholarship Tax Credit programs. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single-solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit www.AAAScholarships.org, or contact Kerri Vaughan at kerri@aaascholarships.org or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.



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