



CONFIDENCE REBORN: KFI UNLOCKS STUDENT POTENTIAL



"We have the teachers that teach for a paycheck and we have the teachers that teach because that's their passion."

For a young person living in Pontiac Michigan, the chances of taking part in activities that broaden their horizon are limited.

12 year old Taylor lacked self-confidence and with "no chance of being exposed to STEAM opportunities" he was unsure of what was available to him, said his mother, Mrs. Kornegay-Bey.

"We all want our children to excel", so discovering new opportunities and "knowing that learning new things involves having fun," is all that I want for my son, she said.

FINDING HIS SPARK WAS DIFFICULT

"When I asked him what he wanted to do when he grew up he was just nonchalant, and said 'I'm not there yet...I don't want to think about it.' He had up a wall" Taylor's Mom explained.

TEACHING SKILLS TO UNDERSERVED YOUTH

- Hands-on STEAM Activities
- 3600 STEAM kits distributed
- Financial Literacy
- 1740 Students Received Professional Development
- Work Based Learning

A young person's outlook on life is limited when there is a lack of resources, and "Pontiac is an underserved community," explained Oakland Commissioner, Mrs. Gershenson.

Without support and exposure to new experiences, feelings of hopelessness become all too familiar.

Taylor needed a fresh new outlook on life, something that could ignite a spark in his mind. With school being his only learning experience there was only so much he was exposed to.

"I wanted him to learn about other areas of life that he needs in order to have fun, and still succeed at the same time," said Taylor's Mom.

So when the opportunity came around for him to take part in Kids First Initiative "it was a little bit of a push to get him into this area because he's so used to being by himself", she continued.

"We started out during COVID, over the computer and the founder, Mr Bell, sent us our STEAM packages, so we did that at the start. But it was hard in the beginning and Taylor was not so excited with it all being online."

AN OPTIMISTIC VIEW AHEAD

Kids First Initiative helps students achieve their full potential by bridging the STEAM divide.

Through various workshops they are taught skills using hands-on activities that introduce them to high-paying STEAM careers, and provide them with essential resources.

The impact of these programmes have been felt across many communities, consisting of 3 countries, 1 U.S. Territory, 21 states, and 35 cities.

"Once the world began to open up post-lockdown, the kids started using drones and worked on engineering and math projects.

They worked on all types of projects that helped in the area of technology and everything that applies to STEAM. Mr Bell has been doing a great job" explained Taylor's Mom.



"I was a former student and Mr. Bell is still that same awesome teacher who shows practical and real things. He was step-by-step, very strategic and fun, but we knew he was serious.

He taught us a lot about our science projects and how to look at them in a wider view, which helped shape us to be the adults we are today.

Everybody can rub shoulders with Mr. Bell, he really has a heart for the children, and he really cares about them" said Taylor's mum enthusiastically.

Thanks to KFI, Mrs. Kornegay-Bey discovered a path for Taylor to connect with his studies and become excited about learning new things.

This was the best decision for Taylor because "it helped him to open up, to talk more and just have a larger understanding of his life in general. So I think it's a great start for him" she added.





THE KFI EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

"I think Richard really tries to teach kids things like manners, what you should look like when you are going to an interview, and basic skills for children who maybe don't have parents to teach them these things," explained Mrs. Gershenson, Oakland Commissioner.

"It caught my attention that someone would be willing to commit his time to help children learn what it takes to succeed and this wasn't his primary job at the time" she continued.

Taylor's Mom was particularly impressed with the locations her son was able to visit. "Mr Bell always chose safe areas in different places where the kids could have some outside exposure to where they lived.

He picked these phenomenal areas like United Wholesale Mortgage and Wisner Stadium which have facilities like basketball and soccer arenas, and a track and a football field.

This was so exciting because it gave my son the opportunity to be around other children who want to grow and learn, which helped strengthen his learning journey," said Mrs. Kornegay-Bey.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY

"There was a large pivot" in his entire approach, said Taylor's Mom. He is now confident, and "this just let him know that he's able to do and be. Now he says "I want to be a builder, I want to be an engineer", so his vision is more defined.

"It was one of the events that he did with Mr. Bell that changed his insight and gave him that solidification, that this is what I want to do; and he just came back more bright and vibrant," she said excitedly.

"He was more open to talk and you could see how excited he was. He would come in with prizes and tell us what he did, and he loved the drones and rockets. It was just a big change. Overall just connecting with other people who looked like him was key," said Mrs Kornegay-Bey.

"When you attend some of the events and see the kids, you see that this is real. This is a hands-on way of helping kids get ahead.

So when the opportunity to make a more substantial donation from the county happened, it was pretty exciting and the decision to support KFI was unanimous" said Oakland Commissioner, Mrs. Gershenson.

A FUTURE FULL OF POSSIBILITIES

"Every child should try the programme at least once outside of school. We have the teachers that teach for a paycheck and we have the teachers that teach because that's their passion" explained Taylor's Mom.

"Kids First Initiative opened Taylor's eyes to new possibilities and now he believes in himself."

