

Staying on the right track [1]

Samuel Durham and Omar Rosete talk and text at least once a month about school, sports, and life in general.



It's hard to imagine how far the relationship between this young student and his mentor has come in just four years.

As a freshman at Booker T. Washington High School, Durham, now 20 years old, was court ordered to enter Rosete's Crime Prevention Program after an error in judgment landed him in legal trouble.

The Crime Prevention Program, operated by ASPIRA of Florida, Inc. and run by Rosete, focuses on taking youth diverted from the Juvenile Justice System and providing them with stay in school support, academic and personal counseling and family intervention.

"In the beginning it was hard; I always had someone after me about my grades and attendance, but now looking back I see how important it was and I'm thankful for what Omar has done," said Durham.

"Now we have an excellent relationship, Sam is part of the ASPIRA family," added Rosete.

ASPIRA's Crime Prevention Program is funded through the Miami Dade County Office of Grants Coordination and its success can be attributed to the support and resources Booker T. Washington High School has provided.

Acting as a liaison between the youth in the program, their parents and the school faculty, Rosete is constantly involved in all aspects of the students' lives. He keeps track of their whereabouts, grades, classroom attendance, family life and extracurricular activities. He keeps his cell phone close by at all hours of the day and night, just in case one of his students might need him.

Their success is his success.

"At first they refuse to be in the program, but over time they see the benefit of it and they really start to change," Rosete said.

Rosete has a proven record of helping his students make such positive life changes and Samuel's story

is no different.

After much persistence, dedication and focus, Durham graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and received a scholarship from ASPIRA that covers his housing costs, admission fees and tuition at William Penn University in Iowa. He was also awarded financial aid and an athletic scholarship from William Penn University for his outstanding performance as a Track and Field star.

He plans to let his track career take him as far as it will go, maybe even the Olympics, but Samuel's first priority is continuing to put into practice everything he learned from Omar and his four years in ASPIRA's Crime Prevention Program.

"My focus is on studying - it's my future," said Durham.

"Samuel's story embodies ASPIRA's primary purpose of giving youth the tools and opportunities that allow them to overcome obstacles and be successful," said George Cabrera, President and CEO of ASPIRA of Florida, Inc.

A dramatic contrast can be drawn between who Durham was his freshman year in high school and who he has become as he finishes his freshman year in college.

"Everyone makes mistakes, the important thing is to not repeat them," said Rosete, who is always just a call or text away from his students, helping them stay on track.

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