

“Lean on Me ...”

Darryl Green, male involvement coordinator for the Baltimore Division, is a man on a mission. For Darryl Green, it's personal. “My younger brother was killed by another kid over bowling shoes at a bowling alley. He had just turned 17.” From that point in 1987, Darryl knew that he wanted to “try to save some lives....I wanted to plant some seeds.” For Darryl, this mission is not a 9 to 5 affair.

Growing up with four sisters and two brothers in Baltimore, Darryl lived in a home with room for foster children, as well. “My mother was a foster parent – that's why I became a foster parent,” Darryl relates. He shares that he lived with foster youth since he was seven. To this day, his mother is still a foster parent for Baltimore City.

Darryl and his wife, Christie, are licensed foster parents currently waiting for a new foster child to be placed in their home. Since 1990, Darryl has fostered 10 youth, all adjudicated African-American boys.

Since graduating from North Carolina's Pfeiffer University in 1988 with a degree in criminal justice, Darryl has worked for Baltimore non-profit agencies – Maryland Mentoring Partnership, Urban League, and R.A.I.S.E. (Raise Ambition and Instill Self Esteem).

Darryl co-founded T.E.A.M. (The Empowerment of African-American Males) in 1995. Three years later, four Casey youth attended T.E.A.M.'s camp. Returning those campers to Casey, Darryl also dropped off his resume. More than a year later, Team Leader Linda Cymrot called Darryl “to talk about a few things.”

When Darryl joined Casey in February 2000 as the agency's first Male Involvement Coordinator, “I worked very much from scratch.” He completed an assessment and discovered that finding jobs is a priority of young fathers. Child support and criminal justice issues are also primary. The biggest challenge is “getting the guys to trust.” Darryl notes one young man whom he called three or four dozen times with no calls returned. “Now I speak with him weekly,” Darryl grins. “You have to recognize that the system has failed them so many times.”

Darryl works exclusively with fathers, some as young as 16. He sees his role as helping to remove barriers that stand in the way of being good fathers. They need assistance with issues like employment, health, substance abuse, education, finances, and help with legal matters such as child support, visitation, and custody, he says. The newest program to help fathers is ‘Dads 101,’ a six-week training program for new and expecting fathers.

Darryl is working with fathers in correctional facilities, as well. "I try to instill hope in them ... talking to them about being the best fathers they can be." Sometimes this entails conversations about their relationship with their own father and how that relationship is similar or different from the one they have with their child.

In addition, for the past two years Darryl has spent his free time feeding the homeless at a local shelter. When asked what else he enjoys doing outside of Casey, Darryl responds, "... just being a good husband and father." Darryl smiles and says, "I am a young father myself (at age 37), since this is my first time at being a father." His daughter, Rebecca, age 4, was a frequent companion when he visited the Casey office, even before working there.

With whatever time is left over, Darryl plays in the University of Baltimore Law School basketball league ("I play with judges and lawyers," he quips), holds the second leadership position in his Masonic Lodge, and cites golf as one of his favorite pastimes.

Asked about future aspirations, Darryl responds enthusiastically, "I want to connect with more fathers." He laughs and adds, "I want to make this fatherhood piece so big that I create a supervisory job for myself." More immediately, he has applied to the University of Maryland and Howard University Schools of Social Work to begin his MSW. This would be his second Master's degree, as he earned one in criminal justice from Coppin State College in 1998.

"I love what I do," Darryl shares. It shows. He adds that he feels "truly blessed" in his Casey role. "It makes me feel good at the end of the day." So it should, as Darryl's message is a simple one that he is fond of saying to others – "Peace and keep smiling."