

Mt. Airy man's Xmas tale of redemption 'Shot twice in the head but far from dead'

by Len Lear

Christmas is a time of redemption and inspiration, and no one fits that definition more than Maurice Young. On Sept. 18, 2009, Mt. Airy resident Maurice Young, now 26, was shot twice in the head. As a result, Young was paralyzed, suffered major brain damage and, according to his doctors, was not likely to survive his catastrophic injuries.

But Young defied the odds. He had to re-learn how to walk, speak, communicate and think for himself. His body remained barely functional, but through time his physical capabilities grew, and his mind was determined to overcome. Young's recovery took three years, during which time he had six brain surgeries, spent one year in diapers and two in a wheelchair.

Young, who now lives in Germantown, grew up in Mt. Airy in a "nice family with food on the table," but he would actually get made fun of for living comfortably in Mt. Airy. "Growing up," Young told us recently, "I had identity issues, so I can say I ran with the wrong kind of people just to fit in and feel like I belonged. I was shot at Tulpehocken and Magnolia in Germantown. The events that led up to me being shot involved a constant feud with a friend/enemy I constantly argued with ...

"Me being 6-foot-2 and 250 pounds and he being 5-foot-6 and 125 pounds, one could conclude why he chose to pick up a gun to stop me. The guy who shot me set it up where he caught me while I was drunk, and a fellow acquaintance of ours called the ambulance..." (Ed. Note: We were not able to find out what happened to the shooter.)

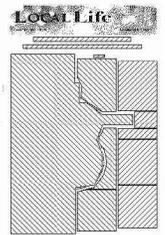
When he had regained enough strength and mental ability, Young's first priority was getting a job. He learned about JEVS' Orleans Technical College's (OTC) Human Services program and set his sights on a career. (OTC is a non-profit trade school in Northeast Philadelphia.) Young received help with school funding through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and shortly thereafter earned his Mental Health First Aid Certification and completed the Human Services diploma program.

(JEVS at one time stood for Jewish Employment Vocational Services but now just goes by JEVS Human Services. It started in 1941 helping Jewish refugees escape the Holocaust but very quickly expanded their services to help people in the Delaware Valley without regard to race or religion.)

During the internship phase of the program, Young practiced his new skills, working with families and youth members of the Family and Youth Service Bureau – and with the help of OTC's career services he re-entered the workforce as a paid employee of The Bridge shortly after graduation. Today Young works as a Youth Mentor and is one of several OTC Human Services graduates hired by The Bridge in recent years. (The Bridge is a nonprofit program for adolescents and their families seeking to overcome substance abuse.)

Young has even written a book entitled "Shot Twice in the Head but Far From Dead; the Story of a Juvenile Delinquent" (ISBN: 978-1-47710-936-6), in which he does not try to smooth over his very rough edges growing up.

"I attended John Story Jenks Elementary School in Chestnut Hill," he said, "but I was kicked out a week before graduation for breaking a classmate's jaw." During his years of rehabilitation, however, "I realized my God was in control of my recovery, and I knew without a doubt I'd be alright. I released myself from the hurt and anger by forgiving all parties and continued



with my life.

“During my recovery I sat and thought a lot. I had no choice, being stuck in a wheelchair, and I thought; 'How can I turn this tragedy into a triumph?' So I began writing and emailing different shows like Ellen, Steve Harvey and Judge Mathis. After months of no reply, I told a few family members I wanted to write a book, and weeks later my mom had a laptop waiting on my bed for me as I returned from therapy.

“She knew someone who published a book and retrieved the information from that person, so I self-published with the same company. I just did not realize that self-published authors are pretty much put on a boat and pushed off to sail alone, whether it's successful or not. My plan for the future is to get my book republished, acquire a contract that's substantial for my needs and get a house for my son, Dior, 7, and I hope to run my own program one

day.

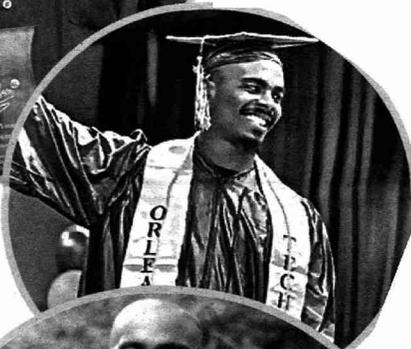
“I tell the kids I work with now that lead very similar lifestyles that it's all fun until you have to pay that price, and you never know if you're able to cover the cost. The hardest thing I had to do was learn that no matter what, I am in control.”

On Nov. 9 JEVS Human Services honored Young for one of its 18th Annual “Strictly Business” Awards in a ceremony at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel. Justin Windheim, a JEVS spokesman, told us that Young was given an “Inspiration Award” because “with a top GPA (3.85) and an off-the-charts inspiration, Maurice thrived in Orleans Tech's Human Services program, and they couldn't be more proud. Thus, the nomination and now the Inspiration Award.”

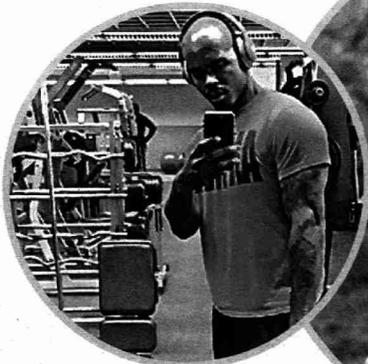
For more information, visit <https://jevshumanservices.org>



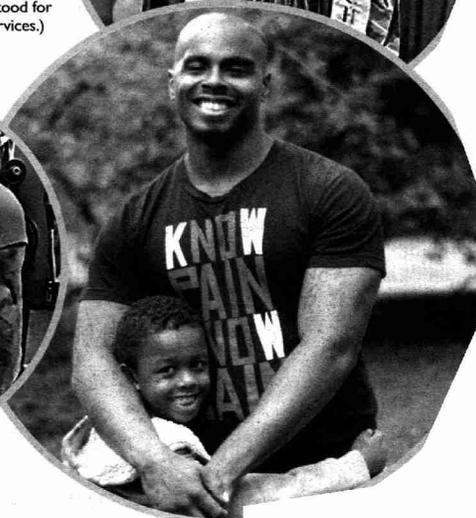
Maurice is seen with his very proud mother, Yvette Flowers, after he was given this Inspiration award by JEVS Human Services at their annual Strictly Business awards event. (JEVS at one time stood for Jewish Employment Vocational Services.)



Maurice was once thrown out of John Story Jenks Elementary School in Chestnut Hill, but he recently graduated from Orleans Tech with an almost perfect 3.85 grade point average.



Considering the fact that Maurice had six brain surgeries, spent one year in diapers and two in a wheelchair, he has done a remarkable job of working out like a professional athlete and getting himself back in great shape.



Young wants very much "to get a house for my son, Dior, 7" (seen here). Maurice's t-shirt reads "Know Pain, Know Gain."



This X-ray taken after Maurice was shot clearly shows the two bullets still in his skull.