

"We can certainly all appreciate a young man who excels in school, sports, and extracurricular activities; mentors and coaches his peers; and volunteers in multiple crusades to clean up his city and to lift our most vulnerable out of hunger, homelessness, and poverty," said Courtney Scott, Chief Service Officer to Mayor-President Sharon Weston-Broome.

Stephen Waguespack, CEO of the Louisiana Association for Business and Industry and Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School (CRBR) Board member, said, "Clearly a young man of purpose, Jamone Williams has impressed his immediate supervisor at Lamar during his years of employment and has, as I understand it, recently been promoted and entrusted with increased responsibilities. This is exactly what Cristo Rey hopes to accomplish through its innovative work study program. An innovator himself, Jamone is a shining example of what can be accomplished by a young man with integrity and ambition to equal the opportunities afforded him. In addition to his academic and workplace accomplishments, Jamone was awarded the CRBR Sophomore Religion Student of the Year honor for displaying the Cristo Rey values of faith and service as he tirelessly works toward bettering the community around him and the lives of its more vulnerable residents."

"Jamone is a very active volunteer in his community, along with his mother and grandmother who have set that example for him and taught him to always be ready to do good when you see someone in need. As a child, he remembers many situations when his mother would be at the store and would bring him inside to buy food and drinks for people on the street," said Mark Becker, former CRBR Campus Minister.

Simone Taylor, Jamone's supervisor at Lamar Advertising during his years as a student worker through the CRBR Corporate Work Study program, said, "Jamone is a good humored student who is involved in many extracurricular activities. He always has something going on, and is so enthusiastic about his future. He is a caring young man and is always willing to go above and beyond to help others. I am confident that he will continue to display the same commitment and diligence in everything he does."

"Jamone is a perfect example of leadership. He is a bold example to other students. I have witnessed him encourage other students, correct other students, pray with other students, and even accept their decision to ostracize him. He sticks to his morals and unapologetically grows. I recall a conversation we had after class one day. He said, 'Sometimes they don't like how I think, but I'm me. Not perfect, just me.' He has wisdom beyond his years. Although I am not certain of all the contributions that helped shape him, it is evident that he stores those experiences and builds on them," said Louisiana Resource Center for Educators Chief Development Officer Bianca Chandler.

Tyler Litt, with New Schools for Baton Rouge, said, "Looking at the maturation Jamone has experienced in his personal life from the day he set foot on campus. . . I could think of no one more fitting for recognition for his hard work. His ability to speak to anyone, about anything, and his willingness to be vulnerable in the interest of growing others around him is remarkable. Seldom do you find young high school aged guys

with such a level of well roundedness and care for those around him . . . He has worked extremely hard to not become another African American male statistic . . ."

"Who is Jamone Williams? Whoever he wants to be. He is the future," said Jada Cain, one of Jamone's high school teachers at CRBR.

People from all over the community heaped praise on Jamone Williams leading up to his being named an LPB/Rotary Club Louisiana Young Hero in 2019. ([Click here](#) and go to 31:49 to watch Jamone's segment.)

On Saturday, September 18, 2021, Jamone Williams's light was extinguished and all that potential mowed down when he was shot to death in his car not far from where he grew up, where he went to high school, where he fed the hungry and clothed the needy and served his community, the city of Baton Rouge, the State of Louisiana, and God Almighty. Jamone Williams, hero to so many who were blessed to witness his acts of kindness and greatness, became a statistic.

The essay written about Jamone Williams as part of his nomination for the LPB/Rotary Young Heroes Award goes like this:

Marcus Aurelius said, "Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be; be one." I tell you with certainty Jamone Williams is the embodiment of the philosopher's call to live deliberately, powered by purpose. Jamone is a son, a student, & a leader striving to be a light in the dark & a help to his fellow man in the North Baton Rouge community--& as far as the ripple effect of his acts of kindness will flow. Jamone has not had it easy, starting out with his family packed into a 2 bedroom apartment in an area plagued by violence, homelessness, and overwhelming poverty. His mother & grandmother worked hard to put the family in a better situation & to see that Jamone & his siblings were on a path to a brighter future. In turn, Jamone has made the most of every hard won opportunity afforded him. He has also made it his mission to give a hand up to anyone around him struggling with life's challenges. Being passionate about getting the most he can out of life, work, & education--and equally passionate about sharing his successes, spreading positivity, & inspiring greatness in those around him--makes Jamone Williams a Young Hero in our community every day, in every way. Jamone takes the Corporal Works of Mercy to heart, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, & visiting the sick--being the hands and feet of Christ in the world. He met a man with feet so swollen from diabetes his sandals had broken, & Jamone gave him a pair of shoes to keep his aching feet warm and dry. He continues to check up on & visit the man--and any others he encounters who are in need of help or simply friendship and human kindness. Through Cristo Rey Baton Rouge service projects spearheaded by campus minister Mark Becker, Jamone is able to help the homeless, the hungry, & the lost through ministry & community outreach under the North Boulevard Overpass & to honor the dead by cleaning and beautifying Sweet Olive Cemetery. Jamone has devoted hours, days, & weekends to myriad worthy community service projects through school, church, non profits, & personal endeavors to be the change he wishes to see in the world & to leave every person, place, & situation

markedly better than he found it. Jamone Williams heeds well the words of Mark (10:45), "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, & to give his life as a ransom for many."

Brett Harris, cofounder of a Christian ministry for teens, literally wrote the book on how & why we must "Do Hard Things" and says, "The beauty of collaboration between older and younger generations is that we combine strength with wisdom—a surefire way to accomplish more for the glory of God." The teachings of the youth minister are surely not lost on Jamone Williams, who has well learned the value of working with others--his mother & grandmother, his teachers & ministers, supervisors at his job with Lamar Advertising, & leaders in his community--for the greater good. He does not simply follow the direction of his elders toward accomplishing goals; Jamone mentors, inspires, & works hand in hand alongside his peers & younger members of his school & community as well, putting into practice all he learns. Jamone understands it in fact does take a village--and that children and adults indeed teach each other many valuable lessons when hearts & minds are open & hands are willing. Adept at receiving and dispensing wisdom, sharing ideas, & shunning the "It's always been this way; we can't break the cycle" mentality, Jamone daily innovates & motivates toward a healthier, happier future.

Jamone didn't get to be the 2018 Religion Student of the Year & rack up at the end of year awards ceremony last June by coasting through classes & keeping to himself; he worked as hard as any student or teacher on the campus & consistently went above & beyond to achieve his goals--personal, professional, and academic. Jamone continues to be a valuable peer mentor, tutor, & academic coach; an outstanding student; & a talented & dedicated athlete on the baseball field, the basketball court, & the track. Having a penchant for calming the chaos around him, Jamone has also voluntarily led peer meditation. With a pronounced personal desire to improve his surroundings every day in all ways, he also participates in litter abatement and recycling efforts big and small, organized and spontaneous . . . group activities as well as individual displays of personal responsibility--even when he thinks no one is watching. As his teacher, a fan in the stands at school sporting events, & a devoted supporter of Cristo Rey, I have indeed been watching as the phenomenal young Jamone Williams walks this world as integrity personified, governed always by what is right, what is good, & what is true.

"How shall Integrity face Oppression? What shall Honesty do in the face of Deception, Decency in the face of Insult, Self-Defense before Blows? How shall Desert and Accomplishment meet Despising, Detraction, and Lies? What shall Virtue do to meet Brute Force? There are so many answers and so contradictory; and such differences for those on the one hand who meet questions similar to this once a year or once a decade, and those who face them hourly and daily."

Though my parents hail from the 70805 and my childhood stomping grounds include a little house on Lemonwood Dr., I can't answer W.E.B. DuBois's questions. I face roadblocks & challenges of my own, but I don't know the trials & tribulations of a young black man from a tiny apartment in a crime ridden part of town. What I can tell you is

the young man in question has inspired me to believe there is cause for much hope and celebration with regard to the future of our society. Jamone Williams has risen from hard & humble beginnings to a position of leadership in school, at work, & in the community while raising up those around him. I expect Jamone & other Young Heroes of his generation will do nothing short of save the world.

I wrote those words, and as I share them with you and reflect on memories of Jamone and shattered dreams of his limitless potential, I wonder . . . Could we still see and spread Jamone's light in this community, in this world? Is his flame truly extinguished, or could we as a society band together to see that some good comes from this tragedy-- to see that Jamone Williams, Louisiana Young Hero, did not live and die in vain?

I started by patronizing Squares Florist on Cedar Grove and K&M Tees on Scenic Highway to get prepared for Jamone's memorial service at Cristo Rey tomorrow. Very small acts, yes, but significant to me. I chose to spend some money with north Baton Rouge businesses to support the 70805 and surrounding area. It's where my parents grew up. It's where I spent many days, nights, weekends, and summers as a child, as a teenager, and into adulthood. Patronizing businesses in the area is a small step to rebuilding the community, but it is a step. I invite you to take that step with me.

And we could do more, so much more. Get involved with local not for profits, churches, schools . . . Any organization working hard day in, day out to raise our more vulnerable brothers and sisters in the Greater Baton Rouge area out of poverty. Donate time, donate money, go to work part time or full time with an entity that keeps its eyes and heart fixed on making our community a safe one, at the very least, and which ultimately gives rise to the likes of Jamone Williams, the Young Heroes of Louisiana . . . The future. I beg you, do not let Jamone Williams be just another African American male statistic. We can and must do better.