Darryl's Story

Darryl grew up in a neighborhood where drugs, gangs and violence were almost unavoidable. His mom was a single parent working two, sometimes three, jobs just to make ends meet. She knew that alone, she couldn’t give her son the life she wanted for him and that if she didn’t do something, he would follow the path of so many others from his neighborhood.

Darryl's mom reached out to United Way and United Way connected Darryl with Greg and Barbara, mentors who would become Darryl’s second parents and his lifelong friends.

Greg and Barbara showed Darryl a different world than the one he knew. They provided a positive and consistent presence in his life, setting an example for him and giving him something to aspire to.

Darryl learned so much from Greg and Barbara, but one moment in particular sticks out in his mind. Darryl was 10 years old the first time he walked into Greg’s office and saw the view of downtown from 17 stories up. “He told me that I could have that,” Darryl remembers. “He told me that I was smart enough and hardworking enough to achieve success.” Greg and Barbara, both engineers, encouraged Darryl to focus on school, go to college and pursue success. Over and over again, they told Darryl that he could be anything he wanted to be, even an engineer like them.

“In retrospect, that was the single most impactful moment of my life,” Darryl says. “I attribute all the success I’ve experienced to that moment on the 17th floor of that building when Greg told me that I would be successful. I believed I would be an engineer, and that’s what happened, I became an engineer.”

Greg and Barbara have remained strong influences in Darryl’s life. They were there to cheer him on as he walked across the stage at his college graduation and to see the seed they had planted so many years ago not only sprout, but spread, as Darryl started his career as an engineer—and a mentor.

Now, Darryl is giving another young man an expanded vision, like his mentors gave him. He is making sure that his mentee, Jaylin, gets a good education, sees beyond what he knows, and can dream bigger and better dreams.

“I don’t know where I would be had I not met Greg and Barbara. I don’t know where I would be without United Way. I know that what United Way and Greg and Barbara did for me, they indirectly did for Jaylin. And I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that Jaylin will pay that forward when his opportunity comes.”