

# MAAP STARS Speech

By: Don Robinson

Good Afternoon/Morning Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Donavayn Robinson. I am a senior at Paladin Career and Technical High School. I've been involved in MAAP STARS for three years now and currently serve as President in my schools MAAP STARS chapter. MAAP stands for Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs. STARS stands for success, teamwork, achievement, recognition, and self-esteem.

I have met a lot of new and interesting people and have gained some lifelong friends while in this program. I have also learned that there are plenty of other students just like me who have the will to do better. Some just don't have the right tools as of yet and that's where this amazing MAAP program comes into play.

Learning leadership skills has been very beneficial for me as I transition from High School to College. I am currently enrolling in the PSEO program at the Institute of Production and Recording. This journey has not been an easy one for me. While I've been through tough times and good times. I have found that I have a strong desire to prosper in all that I do.

I have never really had a stable father figure in my life. This has taught me to rely on myself for answers. Don't get me wrong my mom is an

amazing woman, but it's just kind of tough for her raising seven kids. I took all of the things I learned and became a leader for my siblings.

Last year we were homeless. It didn't really embarrass me or scare me. It just kinda put me in a trance. I found myself stuck in survival mode. It felt like I was here but my zest for life in everything was gone. There was no meaning in anything I did, but I still stuck to it because I knew things needed to get done. Usually people would let bad things hold them down. I'm looking for them to build me up and to learn from them. I know the feeling of pain. I think we all do, but maybe not to the same extent. We all know that hurt. The things I took for granted before were countless. Time being number one.

I don't want to take anything for granted again. I want to be able to share with others what I have learned. I wanted to be a voice. Being a MAAP STARS officer to me means you are open for new knowledge but you're also confident in yourself and your ability to share what you have learned with others to make a difference. I'm hoping I can make that difference.

This will be my third year as a Restorative Practice leader. I enjoy leading student led circles and peer mediating. Over the last two years I brought Restorative Practice to MAAP STARS as a team presentation at our Spring Conference. Last year was the first time I presented information

by myself. It is my hope that I can share my information with others so that I can maybe change someone's life or even better help save someone's life. Being a MAAP STARS officer assists me in getting this message forward and sharing with other schools what a benefit the MAAP STARS Program can add to any institution. I believe that what you put into the world is what you get back. I also want to say thank you for taking the time out of your day to politely listen to my story.