



Life lessons determine how Greenville minister now sees others

By Angelia Davis

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The Rev. Darian Blue roots for the people that others give up on. He doesn't give up on them because others didn't give up on him.

Potential is what Blue, senior pastor of Nicholtown Missionary Baptist Church, said he sees in others.

"I believe that there is greatness in everyone, and there are lessons in failure that will propel you into your future," Blue said. "At least that is what happened for me.

"It's almost like God used all my failures, mistakes and missteps to forge a brand new person. That's why when people start telling me about their problems, I start smiling, because every problem presents another opportunity to change," he said.

Change for the better is what Blue is striving for in the lives of his parishioners and the children served by the Phillis Wheatley Center, where he is executive director.

He said the huge driving force in his life is his love for God and his passion for people.

His connection with the "underdog" stems issues he endured in his childhood.

Blue, a native of Gainesville, Florida, acted out — and was kicked out — of elementary school.

"Things weren't right at home and that was just my cry for help because of the environment that I was raised in," he said. "It caused me to do some things and I had to go move with my dad's side of the family."

Blue said it was people like his mother, Angela Jefferson, who taught him how to love unconditionally.

"My mom is one of the greatest women I know. She made mistakes, but for some reason, I couldn't hate her," he said. "That's the way I see everybody who I come in contact with."

Blue's initial plans didn't include connecting with a church congregation as a minister. He majored in political science at Florida A&M University with a desire to become a congressman.

"That was appealing to me to represent a group of people and make change through policy," he said.

He later moved to Bronwood, Georgia, where Blue said he was pastor of two churches, worked as a water pollution control specialist, and served on City Council.

He'd never heard of Greenville until a deacon from Nicholtown said the church was looking for a new pastor and invited him to come there to preach.

The invitation came at a time when Blue was feeling like his season in Georgia was up. He's been seeking God's guidance on what to do next.

He came to Greenville to preach and knew it was "heaven sent." "There was something about Greenville that captured me right away. The minute I drove through

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the city, I felt at home," he said.

That was in 2011. Before he was given the position at Nicholtown, he and his family — wife, Tracie, and children Kamron, Danyelle, Brianna, Brian, and Brandon — had already moved here.

It was a leap of faith on a level of faith Blue said he'd never ventured into before.

"I resigned from both of my churches, my job, my post on City Council, and took my kids out school, told my wife she needed to resign from her job," he said. "I moved to Greenville without a job. My wife didn't have a job. We didn't know where the kids were going to go to school."

The family lived without an income for three months, Blue said. He used money from his 401K to get the house they live in.

Nicholtown voted Blue in as their pastor in March 2012 and "I knew it was God," he said.

Blue said it was God who also let know him know early on that he would be involved with Phillis Wheatley.

That came to promise, he said, a year and a half ago.

The church and the Phillis Wheatley Center are two separate organizations that serve the same community. The church has since grown from around 45 members to about 400. Phillis Wheatley has about 200 children in its afterschool program and its partnerships are growing, he said.

"All the credit belongs to God and we've got a great staff and a great board here at Phillis Wheatley," he said.

Blue said he doesn't receive monetary compensation for his work at Phillis Wheatley. He serves because there's a need and because he has a love for it.

"There is no financial gain for me doing what I do, however I can lay my head down at night and feel like I've made a meaningful contribution to society," he said.

Blue said he doesn't go by what he feels, rather by what he knows.

"I know that this organization is on its way to being one of the best organizations in this city," he said. "I know our church is one of the most loving churches in this city.

"I know that just as much as they think need me, I need them."

The Rev. Darian Blue, executive director of the Phillis Wheatley Center, poses with children in the afterschool program.

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