

# Former NBA All-Star James Donaldson Stands Tall and Bares All in Run for Seattle Mayor

*Former NBA All-Star James Donaldson tells his story of how he went from the verge of suicide back to a life of purpose, productivity and joy*

SEATTLE, WA, USA, August 15, 2021  
/EINPresswire.com/ -- By Mike Seely

The tallest mayoral candidate in Seattle history, 7ft 2in James Donaldson, backs a beat-up Saturn SUV into an angled parking spot in the cacophonous neighborhood of Georgetown, where modest homes and a row of restaurants share space with a massive airstrip, multiple sets of railroad tracks and a freeway entrance ramp. Planes, trains and automobiles – the urban symphony.



Your Gift of Life Foundation

“

We need more mental-health professionals of color who identify with people culturally, ideologically and traditionally”

*James Donaldson*

“Georgetown is the noisiest neighborhood,” says the 63-year-old Donaldson after sitting down at an outdoor table at All City Coffee, clad in sport sandals, khaki shorts and a gray Washington State University sweatshirt.

Donaldson, a military brat who was born in England, played basketball at WSU, and started his 14-year NBA career in 1980 on the other side of the state with the now-defunct Seattle SuperSonics. For Donaldson, who holds the

NBA record for most games played (957) without ever attempting a three-point shot, squeezing into a normal-sized human’s chair is like a normal-sized human squeezing into a kindergartener’s chair. His demeanor is cerebral and soothing; if he could get paid to read people to sleep, Donaldson would make top dollar. As for the Saturn, he had to have the seat moved back, which is par for the course for any vehicle he’s ever driven.

Donaldson was a well-respected businessman, with six physical therapy clinics and a side venture that saw him traveling to China, where he met his wife and her son. He owned a home in

a nice neighborhood and served on the board of directors for the National Basketball Retired Players Association.

"I had lived a very charmed life," he says. "I had no problems, no issues."

But then, one day in 2015, "the whole table went upside down".

That was when Donaldson – a vegetarian and non-drinker who was, to that point, the portrait of health – suffered an aortic dissection, a heart problem that is common among tall people. Donaldson underwent open-heart surgery, the first of four major heart procedures over the next few years. Unable to manage his businesses, he trusted others to do it for him – and we just ran out of gas. His mother died and his wife left him, taking her son with her.

Donaldson declared bankruptcy and had his house foreclosed upon. He now lives in a one-bedroom apartment.

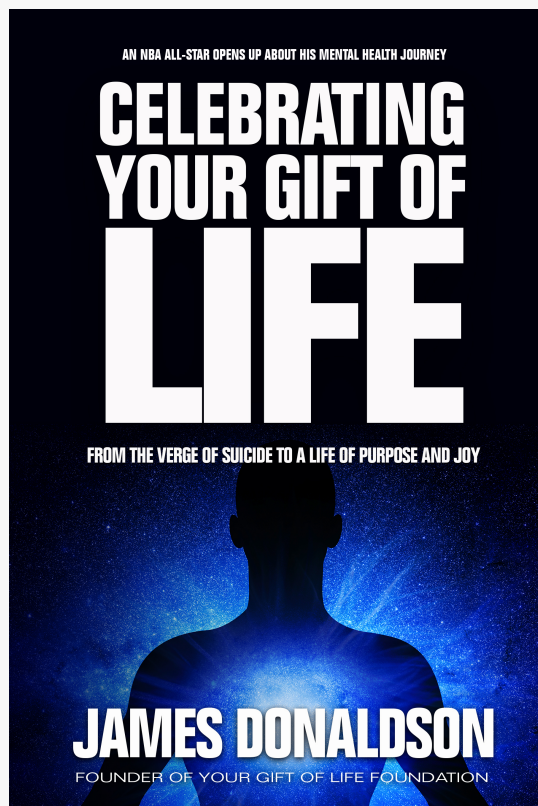
"I'd lost my purpose: I was no longer a business owner, I was no longer a husband, I no longer had a healthy nest egg waiting for me in retirement," says Donaldson, who grew so depressed that he contemplated suicide, going as far as to plan the method.

"I had everything all worked out. It was just a matter of when," he recalls. "I started getting these impulsive voices and I've never really been an impulsive kind of guy. I'd always been very thoughtful and methodical. That was the scariest part, when those impulsive voices told me to go ahead and do it, go ahead and just take your life."

Rather than take his own life, Donaldson called his doctor, who got him to see a psychotherapist. Donaldson also leaned heavily on longtime friends like Tim Johnson, a commercial realtor who helped him open one of his physical therapy locations, and Chuck Wright, a mental-health professional who would regularly provide counseling at one of Donaldson's other clinics.



James Donaldson



Celebrating Your Gift of Life Book Cover

"I visited him in the hospital quite a few times and watched him fight that, but it seemed to me that that really took a toll on his emotions and his mental health," recalls Johnson. "I watched him just seem tortured by that depression. I've had a few friends over the years struggle with that and a couple who have committed suicide, and thought to myself, if I could ever be involved with a friend who was struggling with that, there was nothing I wouldn't do to help. Then I watched him lose his wife, lose his business, lose everything, really. So, I would call him maybe at a time I normally wouldn't call him just to see how he was doing. Quite a few of those times, he'd say, 'Not doing good.' He's honest; he says it the way it is."

Adds Wright, who often counsels first responders, "James knew I dealt with people who were suicidal. He reached out to three to four of us and used us as his resource. I credit him with reaching out; we can't help people who don't reach out. Police officers, when they need help, they call for backup. We were James' backup. He'd call me and I'd call him at maybe 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. It's dark and the curtains are figuratively and realistically closed and the only person you're talking to is yourself, and you're not giving yourself good advice."

Donaldson is a lifelong Democrat who, by his own admission, doesn't "necessarily toe the party line". To wit, unlike many of his mayoral rivals in a crowded field, he is stridently pro-police, feeling that they should be fully funded and given quarterly breaks from their beats to undergo enhanced training and mental-health counseling.

Donaldson hasn't attended a therapy session for two years, but he still talks to Wright and other friends in the mental health field regularly. While he believes formal counseling helped him turn things around, Donaldson, who's Black, laments that the therapists he got connected with were younger white individuals who "had absolutely nothing in common with me".

This is why Donaldson, who runs a charitable foundation, has made it his mission to encourage more people of color to pursue careers in mental health, an endeavor – which would include a college scholarship fund – that Wright agrees is much-needed.

Donaldson says there's also a stigma surrounding mental health that's long inhibited communities of color – and men in general.

[To read full article please click here](#)

James Donaldson

Your Gift of Life Foundation

+1 206-487-3566

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/542775457>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2021 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.