

# A Mother's Fight for Better Education Leads Her Son to Triumph

*Following in his mother NaTasha Mullen's footsteps, Juwan Mullen returns to Delaware's Seaford High School to make a difference in student's lives.*

SEAFORD, DE, USA, March 16, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Juwan Mullen knows a lot about how life, like a basketball, can take weird bounces. Those bounces led him from what he thought would be a promising career on the court to returning to his Seaford, Delaware, hometown and helping build a path to success for students in circumstances similar to his own.

Never much of a student in his younger days, the place where Juwan said he really stood out and felt his best self was on the basketball court. "I was labeled as special ed in elementary school," Mullen said "I didn't take school too seriously. I was a class clown and liked being on the basketball court more than being in the classroom. So, I have a special place in my heart for kids who struggle academically."

**A Mother's Determination:**

Mullen's mother, NaTasha Mullen, a clinical psychologist, recognized Juwan's struggles and was frustrated by the lack of support available to parents of children with learning challenges. An article in [Essence Magazine in 2005](#) reported, "Rather than flounder in the special-education bureaucracy, Natasha Mullen decided to work on improving the process for her child (Juwan) and the many others in their school system. She, along with her husband, Julius, a middle-school basketball coach, and three other parents and educators, cofounded a support group, Seaford Parents for the Education of African-American Kids (SPEAAK), in April 2004. Their goal: to boost parental involvement and raise achievement. Cooperation, Mullen believes, opens more doors than confrontation."

"I am very proud of my mother," said Mullen. "She has always been a very positive influence in



Juwan and mother NaTasha Mullen celebrate his Master's Degree from Delaware State University

my life.”

(SPEAKK now operates as [IMPACT](#) and continues its mission to encourage, educate and empower youth.)

A New Start:

A stand-out basketball player at [Seaford High School](#), Mullen worked hard on his grades and was able to get into Delaware Technical Community College, where he was a star point guard. He kept plugging away academically and ended up playing basketball at Cheyney University in Pennsylvania.

Just when he thought he might be able to catch on as a pro in a European basketball league, life took one of those unexpected bounces. He became a dad and decided being close to his new daughter was more important than basketball.

“I was a psychology major at Cheyney University and that is where I began to really wake up

academically,” Mullen said. “When my daughter was born, I decided to come back closer to home and got a master’s degree in social work from Delaware State University.”

He then started to put his education to use, working in Kent County as a family-based therapist helping people in crisis. But then life tossed a tragic bounce his way.

“

I help students build trust in themselves, in me, in the school, and in life. It’s a slow process, but worth the effort. And hopefully, they rethink where they are in life and what’s next for them.”

*Juwan Mullen*

Tragedy Leads Back Home to Triumph:

“When I was in high school, I hung out with three close friends and we called ourselves the fab four,” Mullen said. “After school, a couple of those guys left Seaford, but one – Jeff Akins – stayed in Seaford. He wanted to give back to the community.”

Akins was shot and killed in August 2020.

“Jeff used to tell me, ‘Juwan, come back home. Do everything you’re doing to help people, but do it here,’” Mullen said. “After Jeff’s death, I took a step back and had to rethink this thing we call life. I went searching for my real purpose.”



Juwan at work as a clinical social worker at Delaware’s Seaford School District.

That search led Mullen back to Seaford and the job he has now – a clinical school social worker in the same district he attended as a student, using his experiences to help reach students facing their own challenges.

“I feel hope here at Seaford,” Mullen said. “I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing. A lot of kids here have issues with anxiety, about being back in school after being out a year because of Covid. They see their families struggle with finances and losing jobs because of Covid. Some of these youths aren’t sure what direction to take and so they go with the first one they see and end up in gangs, committing physical and verbal violence.”

He said even though he’s been on the job just over a year, he knows he is making a difference.

“These students are our future. What 15-year-old doesn’t think he knows everything? I am in a position to help them build trust in themselves, in me, in the school, and in life. It’s a slow process, but worth the effort. And hopefully, they rethink where they are in life and what’s next for them. “

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