

**Step Up For Students
October 2008 Student Spotlight:**



**Dy'Shaun Hagans
Victory Christian Academy
Jacksonville, FL**

Fifth-grader Dy'Shaun Hagans is enjoying his second year at Victory Christian Academy in Jacksonville, a school he is able to attend with help from a Step Up For Students Scholarship. Once a student who struggled to pass his classes, Dy'Shaun has overcome significant hurdles over the past couple of years and is working towards a promising future at Victory Christian.

Dy'Shaun started struggling academically when he was in Kindergarten. Worried that he was not ready to advance to the first grade, his mother, Tarana Harper, decided to hold him back that year and he repeated Kindergarten. Dy'Shaun was better prepared after repeating Kindergarten, and he performed well in school during the next couple of years. However, when he was in third grade, his struggles started again and continued throughout his fourth grade year. He had some difficulties with reading, but his main problems were in his math class. Since he was not in an environment that could address his learning needs, his grades began to drop to C's and D's. By the end of his fourth grade year, Dy'Shaun was in danger of failing.

Tarana knew that she had to find a different educational setting to help Dy'Shaun to overcome his difficulties in school. After learning about Victory Christian Academy from a friend, she was certain that the school would be able to offer her son the help he needed. But Tarana, who has worked at Aetna as an underwriting analyst for five years, did not think she would be able to afford the private school tuition – especially with two other children to care for. That's where Step Up For Students came into her life. The program provided her with the assistance she needed, and she was able to enroll Dy'Shaun in Victory Christian Academy.

When Tarana met with the Victory Christian staff upon Dy'Shaun's enrollment, the staff members determined that Dy'Shaun had fallen so far behind that he would be better served to repeat the fourth grade. This plan allowed Dy'Shaun to get back on track academically. With the help and dedication of the Victory Christian teachers, he began to grasp the subjects in his classes. By the end of the year, his grades had risen to B's, including math, a subject he continually struggled with in the public school.

Dy'Shaun's progress has continued this year as he works hard to keep his grades up. Additionally, his overall attitude toward school has changed, and he is a much happier child. He has even joined the school's band and plays the trombone.



About Victory Christian Academy

Located in Jacksonville, Fla., Victory Christian Academy currently serves more than 200 students, 42 of whom are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The school administers the Stanford Achievement Test to measure student progress and achievement, as well as the Otis-Lennon School Ability (OLTSTAT) to measure student ability. The annual tuition cost at Victory Christian is \$3,800 for elementary and \$3,900 for middle school and high school.

About the Step Up For Students Scholarship Recipients

The typical Step Up For Students scholarship family of four has an average income of \$24,489, and more than 60 percent of scholarship recipients come from single-parent homes. The typical scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a single parent/caregiver. Many are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future look for viable options. They apply for Step Up For Students Scholarships so their children can attend the school best suited for their special needs, beliefs and abilities, and to address negative trends in their child's learning skills and/or environment.

Step Up For Students Scholarships are funded by corporations that redirect up to 75 percent of their corporate state income tax liability to a qualified Scholarship Funding Organization in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. For more information or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit www.StepUpForStudents.com, or call Kerri Vaughan at (866) 344-9553.

