

PASSION

& Purpose

STEPS ON A JOURNEY

By **Isaiah M. Oliver**, President and CEO

Comfortable in the back seat of a new teal Honda Accord with my elementary friend LaKeshia Roberson, we were off to the city-wide spelling bee. The winning word was either “necessary” or “syllable,” but fifth grade gets longer ago with each passing year. I won the bee, the first trophy I ever received that was not sports related. It was my smart trophy. I experienced a new kind of “Black boy joy.” A dose of affirmation that would shape my student and professional path for years to come.

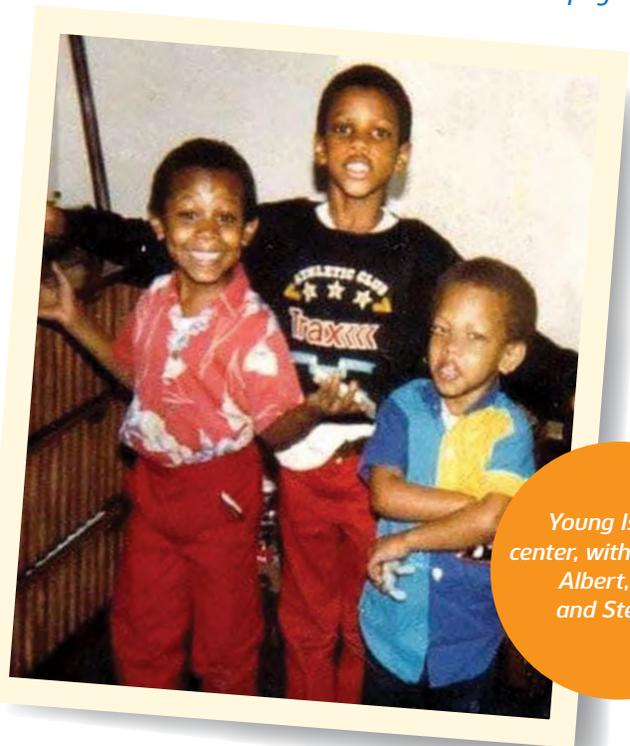
Our teacher was Brenda Duckett Jones. She was my favorite teacher, because she was skilled at making me feel special in a room full of brilliant Flint kids. It was typical for me to finish my work quickly, and then spark up a conversation with a classmate. One might say this was an early sign of an innate ability to listen deeply and actively engage, others might say I was a chatter box. I choose to embrace the positive leaning impression of myself. Either way, she handed out assignments that would keep any eager chatter box from disrupting the learning process for others — like reading an article from JET Magazine and reporting back. It was positive affirmation. It was an opportunity to embrace a different narrative. It was special.

My elementary years began at Garfield Elementary School. My kindergarten principal was Dr. Jessie Muldrew. She was so amazing. Everyone was so afraid of her because she would not hesitate to use the paddle. We called them swats. It was officially illegal at this point, but that did not slow the train. Didn’t matter much

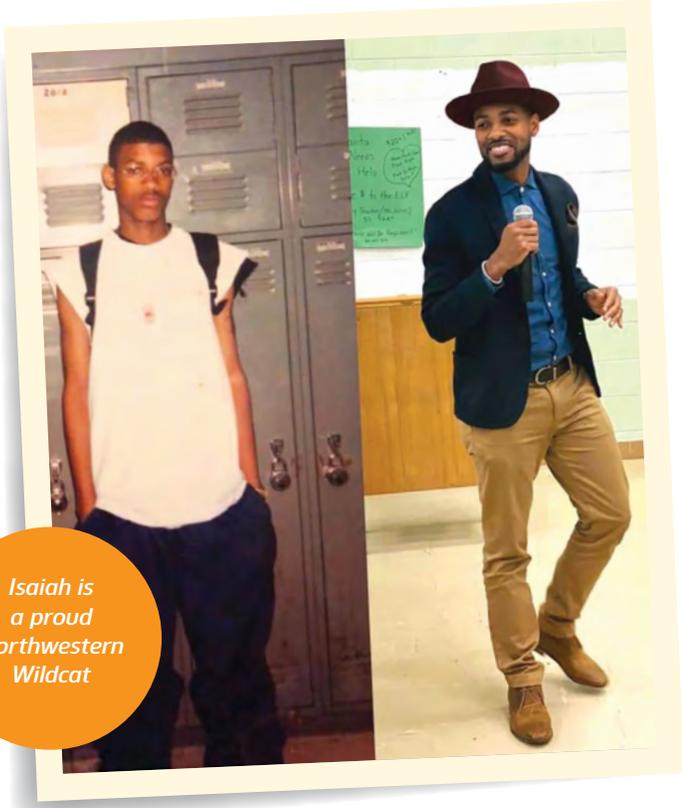
for me either way. Being little in stature and a bit of a teacher’s pet, I escaped the group swats. Something about whatever I did to avoid those swats stuck in her craw. In a good way. I developed a deep love for Dr. Muldrew and I knew she loved me too. Through the years, we remained close. They say relationships develop at the speed of trust and trust takes times. Time was invested and as a result, I trusted Dr. Muldrew.

I attended Garfield and Brownell for elementary. Holmes was my middle school, and I am a proud graduate of the best school on Carpenter Road, Northwestern High

continued on next page



Young Isaiah, center, with brothers Albert, left, and Steven.



Isaiah is a proud Northwestern Wildcat

continued from previous page

School. Home of the Wildcats. I graduated in 1999 with stellar grades and scholarships to attend college. This would be a first for my immediate family.

Mama raised me to be tough enough to not get pushed around in my neighborhood, but emotionally aware enough to prepare for a future that would be vastly different than my upbringing. Everyone was steering me towards college — teachers, counselors, family. With a solid grade point average and above average standardized test scores, mama would say I can use my smarts in ways that she could not.

I contemplated attending Kettering or University of Michigan to become an engineer. Or Lawrence Technological University for architecture. But on my first visit to Central Michigan University, the counselor, Michael Guy, said, "I can see you here." That is all it took for me to enroll, don the maroon and gold, and become a Chippewa. Dr. Muldrew drove me to Mount Pleasant. That was a life changing move for me, and that ride with her will always live in my heart.

Scholarships helped keep me from getting into big debt. Room and board were expensive, so I did take out student loans for those expenses. I

"My hope for The Flint Promise graduates is that they embrace their life experiences, listen to leaders and mentors who show up in their life, and show their elders that, 'We've got plans to complete this journey!'"



struggled the first semester. Likewise with the next semester. It was time to lock in. My mama would say, "Sh*t or get off the pot." I began to make strategic investments in my future. That energy was matched by those who saw me step up. Over time leaders at the University became family and Mount Pleasant became home.

My CMU navigator taught me how to use notecards, how to study. I picked up a job at Burger King. I coached basketball at the high school. Campus leaders had me over for home cooked meals and taught me how to cook green bean casserole. Kind hearts would let me watch cable at their home while I pulled all-nighters to complete school projects. I learned how to put in the work, but I will always be grateful to my mentors for going beyond to help me succeed.

College is a journey and accepting a scholarship like The Flint Promise is one step on the journey. It is about opportunity. It is about exploring. It is about accepting help from counselors, teachers, coaches, whoever takes you under their wing.

Like Mrs. Bessie Straham, principal of Northwestern High School with hundreds of students. She gave me service hours in the principal's office. It was there I saw leadership in action; my first opportunity to observe Mrs. Straham as the boss of the school and not just its students. Observing Mrs. Straham, I saw pure excellence.

My hope for The Flint Promise graduates is that they embrace their life experiences, listen to leaders and mentors who show up in their life, and show their elders that, "We've got plans to complete this journey!"

THE FLINT PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

More than a promise, The Flint Promise Scholarship Program offers Flint graduates a guided pathway to post-secondary education. A path filled with light, hope, and the promise of support when the day-to-day struggles of studying, basic needs, and health issues become barriers to success. This is the promise we make to Flint scholars — you can earn a college education.

Young adults in Flint, Michigan find hope and opportunity in The Flint Promise, especially for those who are first-generation college students. Through The Flint Promise, donors have the unparalleled opportunity to ensure a new generation can experience the benefits of higher education. Scholarship dollars give both current and future generations of Flint youth the chance to take full advantage of what a college diploma can do, and graduate with little or no student debt.

You can give these students the promise of the American Dream — that their devotion to studies will lead to a better life for them and their families. Your support of The Flint Promise creates a clear pathway to academic excellence by providing students with a chance for future success.

An Opportunity for All

To apply for The Flint Promise, students must graduate from one of 11 high schools located within the City of Flint, or receive a GED in the City of Flint, and reside within the City of Flint at the time of graduation. All students who seek the scholarship apply for federal student aid by completing the

FAFSA form that determines the student's eligibility for need-based aid like the federal Pell Grant. Once the student's total need-based aid (grants, not loans) is determined, The Promise provides the student with a scholarship to pay the remainder of the bill for tuition and fees.

For students, The Promise will combine three sources of funding — a Pell grant or other need-based aid, private contributions, and revenue from the Flint Promise Zone Authority. The result for students is the opportunity to attend college free of any out-of-pocket costs for tuition and fees.

More Than a Promise

The Flint Promise partners with Mott Community College, Kettering University, and the University of Michigan-Flint to ensure students have access to the degree, certificate, or other college credential they wish to pursue. Success coaches guide the academic pathway through mentoring and access to community resources. Life issues like childcare, transportation, and access to food and housing are common barriers to a successful outcome. Through The Promise program, students and their coaches



“The Flint Promise allowed me to focus on my studies by providing all the financial support that I needed. Not only did they support me financially, but they also were there in every way possible. The mentors would send inspirational quotes and tried to help in every way that they could. This scholarship was essential to my academic success.”

— **DARIUS COLLINS**
2022 FLINT PROMISE GRADUATE



“ Flint Promise helped me graduate college by providing the funds necessary. Without Flint Promise, my ultimate dream of post-graduate studies would have been much less attainable due to financial constraints. Thanks to Flint Promise I was able to finish my undergraduate degree completely debt free.”

— ANNA DELGADO
2022 FLINT PROMISE GRADUATE

work through these concerns. Books are expensive, and The Promise covers those expenses.

The unique wrap-around services offered through The Flint Promise support students on a path toward a well-paying career and promising future.

Support Flint’s Young Adults

To secure the future of The Flint Promise Scholarship Program, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint is committed to raising \$4 million in endowment for The Flint Promise Fund. This endowment supports a college-going culture among Flint students with the peace of mind that costs are manageable. While this goal is ambitious, it is necessary, and we know that through your generosity it is achievable.

While your gift to The Promise will depend on your own financial situation, we would be pleased to help you make a gift that meets both your needs and those of Flint youth.

One-time gifts help build the endowment. In addition, you may make pledge payments over time in accordance with your individual preferences.

Friends of the Promise

Gifts of \$10,000 or more can establish a named fund under The Flint Promise that will endure in perpetuity. These gifts can be up to three-year pledges paid on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. Monthly auto-debiting is available.

The Community Foundation also gratefully accepts gifts through wills, bequests, and estates.

Mission Possible

The Flint Promise Fund was established in 2018 through generous support from Consumers Energy, Tom Gores, and other individuals. To build the endowment to \$4 million, your gifts make all the difference. Help us light a pathway so that every high school graduate in Flint has access to a college education without incurring long-term debt.

To learn more about this endowment campaign contact Kenneth Vaughn, Development Officer, at 810-767-8270, or email kvaughn@cfgf.org.

“ Flint Promise was the key that allowed me to have a seat at the table. I really wasn’t focused on college but chasing success when that was only 5% of my journey. Like a wise man once told me, being successful gets you to the door, but how you treat others is what keeps you in the room and on to better things.”

— PERCIVIERRE WHITMORE
2022 FLINT PROMISE GRADUATE



CONNECTING YOUTH WITH CAREERS

Flint's automotive history created the American middle class. At the same time, factory jobs often did not require a college education. Thus, the shocking statistics of today's college graduation levels in Flint are no surprise. Just 38 percent of Flint adults under the age of 25 have received some college education or an associate degree. Only 12 percent graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Regardless of how you define success, research shows that a bachelor's degree can make a successful career more achievable.

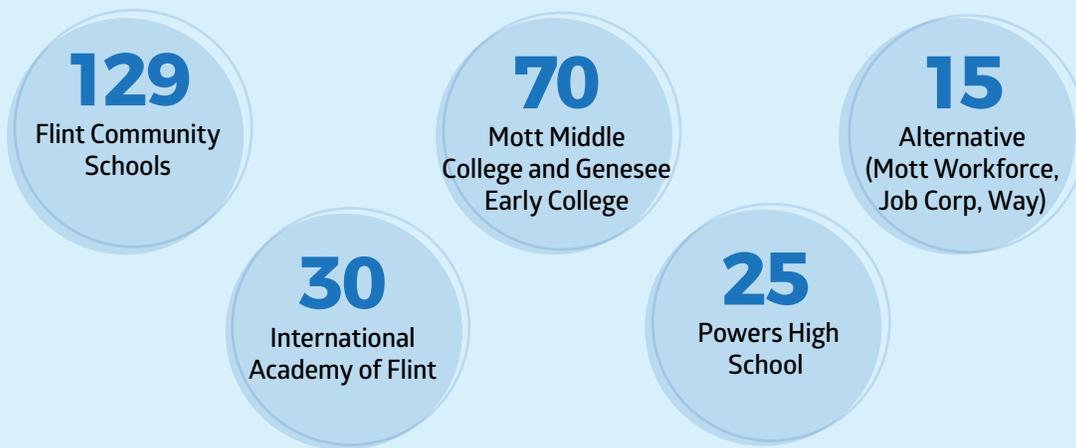
- Bachelor's degree holders earn an average of 66 percent more than high school graduates

- Bachelor's degree holders will add \$1 million to their lifetime earnings compared to someone without a degree
- High school graduates experience an unemployment rate 8 percent higher than college graduates

The Flint Promise also supports technical programs and associate degrees in addition to bachelor's degrees, connecting Flint youth with the opportunity for a successful career. Promise graduates have more earning power, competing for 21st Century jobs that require trade skills or a higher education. Your gifts make this "more than a promise" our mission possible.

THE FLINT PROMISE BY THE NUMBERS

Students Enrolled Since 2018:



Students Enrolled Winter 2022 Semester:





Community Foundation of Greater Flint
 500 S. Saginaw St., Suite 200
 Flint, MI 48502

For good. For ever.
 For everyone.

Non Profit Org
 US Postage
 PAID
 Flint, MI
 Permit #223



Learn more about the Flint Promise Scholarship Program at www.cfgf.org/flintpromise

HOW YOU CAN GIVE BACK

Every Flint student deserves to have the opportunity to further their education after high school. Flint scholars now have opportunities to reach their full potential by earning a degree or technical skill.

The establishment of the Flint Promise endowment helps to secure the future of The Flint Promise Scholarship Program.

Make a gift now, and your name will be honored in a donor list on our website. You may use the envelope provided or make a gift online at www.cfgf.org/flintpromise.

- Make a gift — of any size — to make a difference.

To discuss giving options, contact **Kenneth Vaughn, Development Officer,** at 810-767-8270.



Ken Vaughn

How You Can Support The Flint Promise Fund

- Honor a family member or a significant person in your life by establishing a charitable fund.
- Make a gift to the Flint Promise Fund to help build the endowment.
- Designate a portion of your estate to the Flint Promise Fund.

GIVE ONLINE

Scan this QR code to give online. Thank you for your support.

