

MR. EVERYTHING

EAST HIGH VALEDICTORIAN JUGGLES IT ALL - IMPRESSIVELY

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By: Justina Wang –Staff Reporter



This is Jared Marchiando-Muhammad:

Black. Male. Teenager. Raised by a single mother on the East Side of Aurora and adopted in the sixth grade.

This is also Jared Marchiando-Muhammad:

Highest grade point average in his class for all four years of high school, president of Student Council, the first student to serve on the East Aurora School Board, National Honor Society publicist and representative of his senior class. He stars in school musicals, plays football, runs track and was voted Homecoming King. And that's only half of it.

Outside of school, he interned with mayoral candidate Richard Irvin, serves as co-president of the Boys II Men fraternity, and works a part-time job at Chicago Premium Outlets mall.

Impressed? Wait until you meet the kid. He's neither bashful nor boastful, but a perfect combination of confidence and charisma. Dressed in suits or slacks, with a pencil tucked behind his ear and a demeanor far too mature for a 17-year-old, Jared greets administrators and community leaders the same way he greets buddies in the school hallways.

A big handshake, a broad smile - the same trademarks of his father, East Aurora School Director of Public Relations Clayton Muhammad, whom Jared says is the biggest influence in his life.

"Everywhere I go, I know I'm not only representing myself," Jared said. "I'm representing my family. I'm representing my race. I'm representing everyone who came before me. And that's why I strive to be the best."

Most days, Jared arrives at school by 7 a.m. for tutoring sessions or club meetings. He tackles an impressive list of classes - honors American government, calculus, humanities, microbiology, honors performance, advanced chemistry and a Waubonsie Community College social studies course. Then, it's off to football or track practice, three to four hours of homework, and he may even have a School Board meeting to attend.

And despite a yawn here and there, he's the first to raise his hand in class, to perform his skit on stage, to hush the other students, to volunteer to pass out papers. So when's there time to watch TV, to skateboard with his friends, to hang out at the mall? Jared shrugged.

"I want to be involved in everything," he said matter-of-factly.

After he graduates from East High, Jared plans on attending the University of Illinois, maybe staying in the same dorm as his father did. He wants to major in business administration and marketing and become a defense attorney.

"Dang," a girl called out after he answered a chemistry problem during class one day. "You beat me, Jared."

He stopped taking notes as a toothy grin spread across his face. And for a split second, the student council president, valedictorian, aspiring attorney looked just like an average kid.

"Gotcha," he said.



Marchiando-Muhammad (r) meets with Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich