

A Vision and a plan: Tyree's journey to being the smartest and best he can be

Tyree Booker is a young man with a vision of who he wants to be, and a plan to get there. His story is one of inspiration, focus, and hard work.

Tyree grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. From the time he was a young boy, he knew that he wanted to travel, and that to do so, he would need a career where he could work anywhere. This is what inspired him to look for work in the food and hospitality business. Yet when he started looking for work in restaurants in St. Louis, he was told that, as a black man, he would never be able to make it in this business. Tyree's belief in himself wouldn't allow this discriminatory attitude to discourage him, and he decided to go somewhere that would not only welcome him, but that also offered better pay.

Tyree learned about the Culinary Arts Program at Job Corps, located on Treasure Island just outside of San Francisco. He was accepted into the program and was able to stay in the Job Corps dormitory for the duration of the program. But he knew that when he graduated from Job Corps he would need to find another place to live. It was through a friend that Tyree was able to connect with a Case Manager at Larkin Street Youth Services, and after their first meeting, she helped place him in Lark Inn, Larkin Street's shelter for young people at risk of homelessness.

In the meantime, Tyree enrolled himself in City College, where he became a full-time student with a triple major in hospitality management, food service management, and hotel management. Tyree is thrilled with the education that he's receiving at City College. The quality of the education is excellent and the instructors are very hands on, actively working to help him get to the next level in the industry. Most importantly, Tyree notes: "The school accepts me whole heartedly, helping me achieve just the right balance of dependability and accountability to be successful."

Through his initiative and focus, Tyree's plan of having a career in the hospitality business was falling into place. And this was only a beginning. He wanted his own place in San Francisco to live. He learned about Rising Up through his Case Manager, and applied for Rapid Rehousing, the housing program offered through Rising Up. Given the fact that he was both employed and going to school, Tyree qualified for the program and he was subsequently placed in an apartment in San Francisco about 9 months ago. To strengthen his journey to independence, find time to do his schoolwork, and offset his monthly rental, Tyree also found a catering job working for Hornblower Cruises Thursday through Monday.

Tyree credits Rapid Rehousing with helping him achieve his dream of a long-term impactful job. Yes, there is stress but, as he notes, it's "good stress". Yes, there's a time limit on the subsidy, but Tyree is not wasting that time. He is using the subsidy as a safety net. According to Tyree: "I act like it's not there, but when I fall, it's there."

Tyree's ultimate goal is to travel to different parts of the world, working in high-end restaurants in a leadership position where he is cooking, managing a team, and working for someone he respects. His experiences in the industry have strengthened his drive and made him push harder to fight back against the people who said a black man cannot run a kitchen. Through his focus and his hard work, Tyree is on his way to achieving his goal and in so doing, he is an inspiration to all of us:

"I will make myself the smartest and best me that I can be because someone will appreciate and look out for me one day. I want to make sure that I'm doing everything I can to get there. I'm not going to change me, but I will change the inner workings of myself to be just enough to where I can be helpful and caring. I'm proud of who I am."