

## *As seen in our Annual Report 2010*

### **Taking In Pig**

by DeWayne Coker  
Athletic Director

I met Demarcus about 2 years ago at a Restoration Academy Basketball Game. A friend of mine and mentor of Demarcus brought him for a visit because he thought Demarcus had potential but was quickly falling through the cracks.

Demarcus was a respectful young man, but most young men are respectful when you first meet them. That is not what struck me during my first encounter with him. He looked tired. You could see in his eyes the stress of his life

Demarcus lived with his mother. It was a very difficult living arrangement. He shared a room with his brother and his wife, and he shared the small house with many younger and older siblings. As do many fatherless young men, Demarcus lived life to survive. He became involved with things which could land him in a lot of trouble. He became very shy and inward. He learned to keep his thoughts and intentions to himself. He grew further and further behind in school. After meeting with Demarcus, he applied to Restoration Academy and was reluctantly accepted (because he was so very far behind). It was unclear if the school could get him ready for graduation in two years.

Demarcus was accepted, and for the first three months at Restoration, he rode the transit bus to and from Fairfield every day. He would have to catch the bus at 6 a.m. to get to school by 8 a.m., and he would get home late in the evenings. After a few months of school, his mentor and I determined that something had to give. We didn't believe Demarcus would make it with those circumstances.

After a few meetings, we decided that he should come and live with my family. This was going to be a big challenge because we live pay check to pay check. We barely make it financially. It just didn't seem practical. However, after speaking with my wife, I was encouraged to take the step of faith.

The first year was a challenge. Demarcus wasn't really doing the things he needed to do in the classroom. He was still very introverted. He wouldn't talk to us much, and he constantly wanted to go home. He didn't like house rules, and many times he disobeyed them. At one point, we even considered sending him home. But at some point, Demarcus began to have a paradigm shift. He began to believe Restoration Academy really wanted him to succeed, and he began to believe that the Cokers had no other motive except to help him.

Demarcus increasingly became a part of our family over the next year and a half. Even when he would go see his mom on the holidays, he would make sure he came by our house as well. He became comfortable and trusting. He began to open his world to us. He became very outgoing and quickly became one of the most popular kids in the school. His grades began to steadily improve. He graduated from Restoration in May and will room with my son, Camron, at the University of West Alabama in the fall on an almost-full scholarship.

*This story was covered in a **Faith in Action** segment on CBS 42 news. You can view the segment online at <http://www.cbs42.com/content/faith/default.aspx> and click on the "Movie or Real Life" link.*